

RELIGION, CULTURE, SOCIETY

Yearbook of the MTA-SZTE Research Group  
for the Study of Religious Culture  
Szeged, Hungary

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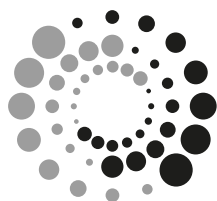
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Yearbook  
of the MTA-SZTE Research Group  
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Edited by  
Gábor BARNÁ and Orsolya Gyöngyössi



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Address of the editorial board:  
MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture  
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Gábor BARNA

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## Change – Conflict – Adjustment

### Foreword

A change in social and economic circumstances often questions the usefulness of existing cultural models, imposing the transformation of previously valid social and cultural practice. This also applies to the functioning of religious life, the practical ways in which religion is experienced. Together, the change, the conflicts appearing as a consequence, and the adjustment strategies raise the question of modernisation conceived as a process seen as a long series or cycle of transformations. Modernity is characterised by combination with traditional values and continual transformation, as a result of which modernity comes to have differing meanings and programmes in the different societies.

The studies in our volume, emphasising the diversity of modernity and culture, examine local adaptations of modernity and local manifestations of change in the 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Thus in the individual studies we find among the generators of this transformation, the technical, societal and civilisational changes of the Industrial Revolution, as well as of globalisation, transnationalism or the migration processes of the present time. The case studies thus focus on the transformation that took place in pilgrimages – that had for centuries remained unchanged – with the appearance of mass transport and the railways; the way Orthodox Jewry as a group culture adapted railway travel to its own world; the prayer books that responded to the changing female roles from the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century movements urged by private revelations, or the changing role and relationship of minister and congregation in local communities. The trend in religious popular music in all denominations shows the ambivalent connection between tradition and change or innovation, reflecting the new religious demands and the tensions generated as a consequence. On the other hand, the modern mythologies that arise show the constant presence of a turning back to tradition and past values, in which the persons of mediaeval saints can gain new interpretations in the light of the present circumstances and can show how the view of the past is changing. The interactions between different Christian denominations, new religious movements, atonement devotions that have risen to oppose secularisation convey the same message. In the light of current political events it is becoming of vital importance to know about how Muslim identity is being restructured in the interaction of European Christian societies and European Islam.

Consequently, the studies in our volume are of interest and value not only for specialist researchers in the study of religion, but for representatives of all disciplines dealing with the past and present, as well as for the enquiring general reader.





## EXAMPLES, PATTERNS, MODELS

### THE PRAYER BOOK AS A SOURCE OF FEMALE IDENTIFICATION MODELS

**Abstract:** In this study I show the examples used by the Hungarian Catholic church at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the moral edification of female believers. My sources were prayer books of the period compiled especially for women and young girls. These books were intended to play a role in religious and moral training, in construction of the ideal Catholic girl, and especially in the urban environment, in counterbalancing popular literature and the secular ideals it offered. The female and male saints held up as models are given an important part in the prayer and meditation texts. In the texts of the period they appear not as intercessors with miraculous powers but as the perfect examples of virtuous lives. In their life careers and the values they represent we can see a Catholic female identification model intended by the clergy to serve as a guide in everyday life. Here, both secular society and church discourse identified the place of women in the triple role of wife, mother and housewife. The female prayer books examined held up for them as a model the virtues of the Virgin Mary (purity, obedience, renunciation).

**Keywords:** prayer books, women, examples, saints, Virgin Mary

The use of examples, models that can be followed is an important tool in shaping social norms and in education. Values and events can be stressed in the way of life and characteristics of the persons held up as examples that can serve as a guide and provide points of reference in the difficulties of everyday life. It can also be said that they are actually social and cultural products, as the moral and cultural values of a given age or social milieu are manifested through them.<sup>1</sup> From this point of departure I would like to show the examples used by the Hungarian Catholic church at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century to construct the female model it held to be ideal. Who did it hold up as an example and what episodes from their life stories, what ideals and moral properties, did it stress? Prayer

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: frauhammer.kr@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> MIHÁLY 2006. <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00035/00099/2006-01-vt-Mihaly-Hosfogyatkozás.html> accessed on: 1 December 2015.

books published in the period especially for women and girls serve as the sources for my investigation.

### A few words about the period

The chosen period of my investigation is the long 19<sup>th</sup> century that brought a radical change in the social role of women in Hungary too. With the introduction of compulsory schooling girls too were able to participate in public education, resulting in a rapid increase in female literacy. By the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the First World War, Hungarian women too were able to continue their studies in higher education, to enrol in certain university faculties, and many female professions were also open to them.<sup>2</sup> All this created the possibility for their own vocation and independent life.

The image of the reading woman also belongs to this period: the changes in literacy produced a multitude of new genres. Thanks to the spread of public education, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century close to half of the Hungarian female population was able to read and write and a further 17% was able to read.<sup>3</sup> Beside the Bible and the prayer book, cookery books, women's magazines, press products for women and above all cheap popular novels in which intimate details of private life and the internal life of the private sphere appeared also became popular in Hungary.<sup>4</sup> Both denominational and lay public discourse regarded novels with suspicion because they were thought to arouse irrational, romantic expectations and even erotic imaginings threatening the existing order. In this way Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina, Effi Briest and Ibsen's Nora appearing in contemporary novels became archetypical figures of the violation of social norms.<sup>5</sup>

The Catholic church expressed its concern and adopted a firm position against the growing output of popular reading matter and the new kind of female ideals it contained.

"It is hardly worth the trouble to speak about the damage caused by bad books in the souls of some, in whole classes, homes and families, in the whole of human society, not to mention religion and

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2 PUKÁNSZKY 2006. 23.

3 TÓTH 1996. 229-250.

4 For more details on the spread and situation in Hungary of the new "female" genres, see: Pogány, György: *Nézetek a leányok olvasásáról és olvasmányairól a dualizmus első felében (1867-1895)* [Views of girls' reading and reading matter for girls in the first half of the Dualist Monarchy (1867-1895)]. [http://epa.oszk.hu/01200/01245/00044/pgy\\_0904.htm](http://epa.oszk.hu/01200/01245/00044/pgy_0904.htm) Accessed on 1 December 2015; KÉRI, Katalain: "Nők csak mértékkel olvassanak ..." Adalékok a hazai női olvasóközönség 18-19. századi formálódásának történetéhez ["Women, read only with moderation..." The formation of the Hungarian female reading public in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries] In: Csóka-Jaksa, Helga – Schmelczér-Pohánka, Éva – Szeberényi, Gábor (eds.), *Pedagógia – oktatás – könyvtár: Ünnepi tanulmányok F. Dárdai Ágnes tiszteletére*. PTE Egyetemi Könyvtár, Pécs, 2014. 319-342. (A Pécsi Egyetemi Könyvtár Kiadványai 12.)

5 LYONS 2000. 354.

faith, virtue and good morals. [...] Reading books that are against religion or destroy morality is like poison to the soul, a poison far more dangerous and destructive than natural poison because it is the poison of scepticism and false belief, godlessness and immorality. [...] May you never come under the power of a certain senseless reading rage.”<sup>6</sup>

The ideas formed about the “modern” woman in the new genres and thematised with growing frequency in public discourse induced members of the clergy to set out and define how they saw the ideal Catholic woman.<sup>7</sup> To achieve this it was necessary to construct an alternative female image based on Christian teachings. One of the vehicles used to transmit these ideas was the prayer book that still had a firm place among the genres of mass literature in the period examined.<sup>8</sup> Their texts could be effective means of presenting the examples as for many centuries literature (both secular and religious) had played the primary role in this.<sup>9</sup> But before beginning a detailed analysis of the examples presented in the prayer books, I would like to make a brief digression to draw attention to a few characteristics of the genre of prayer books for women.<sup>10</sup>

6 *Venite Adoremus* 1902. 70-71.

7 DE GIORGIO 1994. 192.

8 The size of the print runs for various books indicates that the prayer books were intended for mass reading; for example: Tárkány, Béla: *Lelki manna* [Food for the Soul] was printed in 244,000 copies; *Vezérszillag* [Lodestar] in 21,000 copies; Soós, István: *Liliomfűzér* [Bunch of Lilies], a prayer book for confirmation, 24,000 copies. SZINNYEI 1891-1914. <http://mek.oszk.hu/03600/03630/html/> Accessed on 9 November 2015. On the publications and situation of Hungarian book publishing in the period, see: Fülöp, Géza: *Olvasási kultúra és könyvkiadás Magyarországon a felvilágosodás idején és a reformkorban (1772-1848)*. [Reading Culture and Book Publishing in Hungary during the Enlightenment and the Reform Age (1772-1848)] Budapest, Hatágú Síp Alapítvány, 2010. 49-51.

9 MIHÁLY 2006. <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00035/00099/2006-01-vt-Mihaly-Hosfogyatkozás.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

10 A multi-year project on prayer books drew my attention to the source material. Our main aim in the project was to use the texts of the prayer books to reveal the religious teachings and the dogmatic points of the different denominations systematised and passed on by the authors, that is, the clergy, and through this to attempt to approach the religious culture and spirituality of the given period. The texts of the books also provide an opportunity to take different aspects of social history into account in our analyses as these prayers were not but entirely individualised works but were intended to meet complex needs. They have a normative character, serve as a guide for readers, explain to them their obligations and strive to be of use in a wide variety of situations for as many people as possible.

## Prayer books for women and girls at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary

While up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century we hardly know of any Catholic prayer book in Hungary addressed specifically to women,<sup>11</sup> from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a spectacular increase in the number of prayer books intended for women, young girls and educational institutions for girls. Naturally this does not mean that women did not read or use prayer books before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But they were not separate from the prayer books intended for the different social groups and they followed a more or less clearly set general pattern. We also know that it was often women – mainly of high birth – who ordered, financially supported or, less frequently, themselves wrote Hungarian prayer books in the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, also undertaking a major role in directing and shaping the religious life of their own environment (for example, their own household).<sup>12</sup> This kind of female piety disappeared in the years after 1800 when the initiative was taken over by the rapidly proliferating printing houses, the independent book trade and church book publishing.<sup>13</sup> This brought not only an increase in the number of prayer books but also in many cases innovation in the arrangement of their content. In prayer books published before the 19<sup>th</sup> century the life of women generally did not appear at all, or only in connection with marriage, childbirth and widowhood. For the most part the books contained the customary devotional practices (daily prayers, prayer texts for church liturgies, prayers for the church year, prayers to saints and Mary, devotional practices and litanies). These continued to be the main part of the books, but a group titled “Various prayers” clearly reflects a differentiation to meet different emergencies in the lives of women. In many cases a similar trend can be observed in the books with general content. Thus, we find prayers for virgins, single women, women living alone, orphans, brides, young wives, pregnant women, women in childbirth, women in confinement, married women, mothers, women nursing a sick child or husband, women

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11 We have two surveys of Hungarian-language prayers books published before 1850, but they do not include any prayer books addressed to women. These two surveys are: Gajtkó, István: *A XVII. század katolikus imádságiródalma. [17<sup>th</sup> Century Catholic Prayer Literature]* Budapest, Élet Kiadó, 1936. (Palaestra Calasactiana 15); HOLL, Béla: *A magyar nyelvű nyomtatott katolikus imádságoskönyveink bibliográfiája [Bibliography of Catholic Prayer Books Printed in Hungarian]* (Manuscript). Piarista Rend Magyar Tartománya Központi Levéltára, Saját Írások sorozat 121. tétel, Budapest, 1958. As far as we know, Martin von Cochem’s *Grosse-, Mittlere- és Kleine Himmelschlüssel, oder höchst nützliches und trostreiches Gebetbuch für alle christkatholischen Stände, besonders für das Frauengeschlecht* a prayer book that was extremely popular in Hungary too and reissued numerous times and *Myrrhengarten des bittern Leidens ... zum besondern Dienst des andächtigen weibliche Geschlechts eingerichtet* can be cited as examples here.

12 For more details on Hungarian female piety in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, see: BAJÁKI, Rita – BÁTHORY, Orsolya (eds.), *A nők és a régi magyarországi vallásosság. [Women and Piety in Old Hungary]* Piliscsaba, MTA-PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, 2015. (Pázmány Irodalmi Műhely – Lelkiségtörténeti tanulmányok, 10.)

13 FÜLÖP 2010, 49–51.

bringing up a child, farmers' wives with servants, women praying for husbands fighting in a war for the homeland, elderly women and widows. In addition, an innovation in books compiled mainly for young girls was meditations written with the intention of moral edification, education and guidance. These provided an even more direct opportunity than the prayer texts to shape attitudes.<sup>14</sup>

The picture emerging from my investigations to date is that many of the prayer books published in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or later were compiled specifically for urban educational institutions for girls and church schools. This fact determined the audience targeted by the authors as well as the possible reading public for these books. With two exceptions the authors were famous Catholic writers, poets and speakers, or were members of the main orders. Their texts therefore present their ideas to readers.<sup>15</sup>

## Examples to follow

The Roman Catholic church regards the saints as the principal examples to follow. Their veneration and following is rooted in the notion that they realised the Christian ideal and the believers strive in all aspects of their lives to realise that ideal.<sup>16</sup> Thus when we look for examples to follow in the prayer books it is above all the prayer texts addressed to saints that offer assistance. They were written principally to the female saints, as their main interest was in female models. But when analysing the texts we will also see that many male saints could also become models because of particular outstanding virtues in their lives.

Regardless of the period, prayers written to the saints and meditations were an integral part of all prayer books. At the same time there is a certain shift in the function of the different saints in the prayer texts. While in books in popular use with roots reaching further back in time than the 19<sup>th</sup> century, readers could turn to them as effective intercessors in certain emergency situations (illness, natural

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<sup>14</sup> A few examples from the meditations of "Thoughts helping spiritual life" in the "Mary's Child" prayer book: The seriousness of life, the use of time, controlling passions, humility, selflessness and goodness of heart, spiritual purity, love of one's fellow man, meekness, life of work, moderation, art of reading, wise amusement, sincerity and uprightness, respect for one's parents, respect for superiors, fraternal love, true friendship, faithfulness to the Church, patriotism, spiritual life.

<sup>15</sup> We know of only two female authors of prayer books in Hungary, Mária BLASKÓ (1891-1956) and Irma Reiner (1878-?). Mária BLASKÓ was active as a writer and teacher, she was one of the leading figures of the Sacred Heart children's movement in Hungary (the Heart Brigade). Irma REINER became known as a translator and writer of religious works. *Diós, Magyar Katolikus Lexikon I.* [Hungarian Catholic Lexicon] (KL), 2003. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/B/Blask%C3%B3.html>, and KL XI, 2006. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/R/Reiner.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

<sup>16</sup> KL XII., 2007. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/S/szentek%20tisztelete.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

catastrophe),<sup>17</sup> in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century texts the main focus was on their exemplary lives and qualities. The influence of the rational spirit of the Enlightenment can be felt in the background. The demand and aspiration was that in place of the miracle-working role in veneration of the saints in the Baroque age, the believer should be given an example to follow.<sup>18</sup> This placed veneration of the saints on a different plane, making it possible to stress certain of their virtues in order to shape the behaviour of female readers.

Among the female saints the following can be found, almost without exception, in the prayer books of the period examined: Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Margaret of Hungary, Saint Ann, Saint Katherine of Alexandria, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Mary Magdalen, Saint Cecilia, Saint Clare, Saint Agnes. Others who appear less frequently are: Saint Therese of Lisieux, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Saint Rose, Saint Helena, Saint Juliana, Saint Philomena, Saint Apollonia, Saint Barbara, Saint Katherine of Siena, Saint Veronica, Saint Ludmilla, Saint Lucy, Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, Blessed Gizella of Hungary.

If we look through this list we find that most were young virgins who died as martyrs or nuns. In their persons they represent female life situations where young girls before marriage take vows of eternal virginity so that they can devote their lives entirely to divine love. Accordingly, the prayers addressed to them also stress the virtues of virginity, physical and spiritual purity and a life devoted to God. For example, in the prayer to Saint Margaret in her prayer book, Blaskó wrote:

17 One of the most popular Hungarian prayer books, the *Arany Korona* [Golden Crown] can be mentioned as an example. It was compiled in 1719 from her most popular prayers by Eszter PONGRÁTZ, a woman of high social standing. It was subsequently reissued 38 times right up to 1911. Readers of this book could pray to Saint Barbara for a good death, to Saint Anna for offspring and a good marriage, to Saint Catherine for mercy in approaching death, and to Mary Magdalen for remission of sins. It was also generally known that Saint Apollonia helped in case of toothache, Saint Rosalia in infectious diseases, and Saint Margaret helped women in danger during childbirth.

18 It must of course, be mentioned here that the texts were written by priests. Thus, the shift in focus in prayers written to the saints from their role as intercessors to their exemplary virtues reflects primarily a change in the official attitude of the church. We must see behind this the effort slowly unfolding from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century made by the church to rationalise its own teachings in line with the changed religious and social relations and expectations of the period. The attitudes of the urban bourgeoisie moving further away from Baroque piety and the reduced emphasis on religious practice all acted in this direction. However, the faith placed in the miracle-working power of the saints remained strong in popular religiosity. This can be explained by the lengthy process whereby folk culture absorbed the influence of the Baroque, as well as by the fact that bourgeois values and ethos had less influence on the rural population. A good summary of the state of religion in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary can be found in: Kósa, László: A vallási közönyösség növekedése a 19. század közepén. [The growth of religious indifference in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century] In: Kósa, László (ed.), *Művelődés, egyház, társadalom* [Culture, Church, Society]. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2011. 155-184. The findings of the extensive German and Swiss research can also be indicative. For example: SCHIEDER, Wolfgang: *Religion und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart, Klett Cotta Verlag, 1993.; NIPPERDAY, Thomas: *Religion im Aufbruch. Deutschland 1870-1918*. München, Beck Verlag, 1988.; LEHMANN, Hartmut: *Säkularisierung, Dechristianisierung, Rechristianisierung im neuzeitlichen Europa. Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997.; ALTERMATT, Urs: *Katholizismus und Moderne. Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Schweizer Katholiken im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Zürich, Benziger, 1989.

“Help me to long for the Master [...] encourage me to devotion so that I am immersed in the Lord [...] teach me self-sacrifice so that I am ready to sacrifice all for Jesus [...] spur me to endurance and loyalty to my Master [...].”<sup>19</sup>

Or in another prayer, written to Saint Aloysius:

“Help me to reject earthly vanities, delights and temptations, as you rejected the pomp and temptations of the royal court [...].”<sup>20</sup>

Then, a few pages later, we read the following:

“Cultivate and bring to flower in yourself the buds of heroic virtue based on love that must open soon for the happiness of the home. Your heart belongs first to the Lord Jesus and then to your betrothed. It cannot belong to anyone else.”<sup>21</sup>

Many other prayer texts could be cited to show that the saints were set as an example above all to legitimate and emphasise an example to be followed based on physical and spiritual purity, obedience, self-denial and renunciation. In this idea the sentiment of love had to be realised principally in love of God that was placed above all worldly love, but at the same time did not exclude such love. Indeed, that was what ensured the happiness of the girl, the wife, the mother and the housewife.

“A pure heart brings us to God in heaven. Sensuality drags us down to the ground, into the mud, into sin. Overcoming sensuality raises us up, directs the wings of our soul towards heaven. [...] Purity is the touchstone of our love for Jesus. [...] Femininity, that raises woman above the animal state in the eyes of her husband – achieves its glory in purity [...].”<sup>22</sup>

Especially in prayer books addressed to young girls we find that the female and male saints addressed in prayers became a tool of moral education that placed physical and spiritual purity on a pedestal. The reading and repetition of the prayers addressed to them instilled an awareness of this norm and internalised it. Knowing that one of the most strongly emphasised topics of the period (from the viewpoint of women’s history) was the moral education of young girls, this emphasis is not surprising. The members of the clergy also recognised the importance of the question. They saw in girls not just the future of the nation but

19 *Imádság és élet [Prayer and Life]* 1923. 450.

20 *Imádság és élet [Prayer and Life]* 1923. 440.

21 *Imádság és élet [Prayer and Life]* 1923. 549.

22 *Imádság és élet [Prayer and Life]* 1923. 65.



also the guarantee for the revival of the church and Catholic faith.<sup>23</sup> In this way the focus was on deepening girls' religiosity and isolating them from worldly dangers. This involved all areas of modern bourgeois life.

"Be extremely cautious in worldly pleasures and as far as possible keep yourself away from them. [...] following the example of your heavenly mother, seek your joy and refreshment in the home, within the family circle."

– wrote Károly Ágoston in 1894 in his prayer book compiled for unmarried young women.<sup>24</sup> Thus, in the view of the church, women's moral purity could be violated outside the family circle and so it warned girls against excessive dancing, sports, amusements, the cinema and theatre. The author held up Saint Elizabeth as an example:

"She did not find any joy in dancing and secular festivities, but when she was obliged to she took part in such things so as not to cause scandal. But then after one dance she stopped, saying: this one dance was enough for the world; I shall leave out the rest for the name of Jesus."<sup>25</sup>

Besides improper forms of amusement, the meditations in prayer books most frequently blamed reading bad books for the bad morals of youth. Here too they typically preferred very strong restrictions, allowing only works of a religious nature. We can read an episode in the life of Saint Therese as a deterring example in Ágoston's prayer book:

"[...] novels came into her hands and at first she read them unsuspectingly, merely out of curiosity, but they soon became a passion. And from then on her godliness steadily declined [...] it became tepid and lax, a tendency to vanity and self-love crept into her heart. The desire arose in her to see [...] herself and together with this she came to love cosmetics and entertainments. [...] But after a while the

<sup>23</sup> In this connection an idea widely held in the international literature is that the increased attention paid by the clergy towards women (pastorisation) led to the feminisation of religion. This feminisation could be observed principally in the overrepresentation of the traditional religious practices of women, confraternities and female monastic orders. For more details, see: PALETSCHEK 1993. 300-318. A few more literature discussions of the thesis concerning the feminisation of religion: BOCK, Gisel: *Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate. Gender and History* 1, 1989. 7-30; HABERMAS, Rebekka: *Geschlechtergeschichte und "anthropology of gender"*. Geschichte einer Begegnung. *Historische Anthropologie* 1, 1993. 485-509; BUSCH, Norbert: *Die Feminisierung der Frömmigkeit*. In: GÖTZ VON OLENHAUSEN, Irmtraud (ed.), *Wunderbare Erscheinungen. Frauen und katholische Frömmigkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Paderborn, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> *Mária hű leánya [Faithful Daughter of Mary]* 1894. 146. It should be noted that Károly Ágoston was only the translator of the prayer book. No information on the original is available.

<sup>25</sup> *Mária hű leánya [Faithful Daughter of Mary]* 1894. 151.



danger towered so high over her that God showed her the hellish place to which she would go if she continued her bad habits."<sup>26</sup>

In the same prayer book the teacher priest also presents the life careers of two lesser known male saints. James Olier, who showed all his new clothes to the Virgin Mary, so that he could be sure that his dress was morally acceptable,<sup>27</sup> and the other, also a great devotee of Mary, Saint Edmund, who always avoided bad company.<sup>28</sup> He also introduces Frances de Chantal, another saint less well known in Hungary<sup>29</sup>, as a young girl of good birth who was orphaned and was tempted by her lady companion to take part in entertainments and dress up. The pious girl naturally resisted the temptation and "later was betrothed to a virtuous young man of true faith and prepared for this important step in retreat, meditation and prayer, with good deeds and taking the sacraments more frequently."<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the saints mentioned above, female saints who became exemplary wives and mothers and were held up as models by the church were also mentioned, although fewer in number. Practically all the prayer books include Saint Ann, the mother of Mary, who could be taken as an example in a whole series of crisis situations in the life of women: before betrothal, in happy marriage, in childlessness, in difficult childbirth, in widowhood, in prayerful behaviour, in child raising, charitable deeds and support for the distressed.<sup>31</sup> We also find among the women Blessed Gizella, wife of the first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen, who as wife remained always faithful and deeply religious.<sup>32</sup> Saint Blanka also appears: as the mother of Saint Ladislav she lived for her maternal vocation even as a widow, she was always beside her son, teaching him fervent piety.<sup>33</sup>

26 *Mária hű gyermeke [Faithful Daughter of Mary]* 1894. 145.

27 On the basis of the episode in the prayer book it was not possible to identify James OLIER with any of the known Blessed James (of Piacenza, Sale, Griesinger, Marchia). KL V., 2000. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/J/Jakab.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

28 The Catholic Church recognises two Saint Edmunds. One was king of East Anglia who died a martyr for his faith (841-870), the other was Archbishop of Canterbury and a theologian (1170-1240). The episode described in the prayer book cannot be found in the life history of either of the two. KL X., 2005. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/%C3%96/%C3%96d/%C3%B6n.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

29 After a happy marriage and giving birth to six children, Saint Jane Frances Frémyot de Chantal (1572-1641) founded the Congregation of the Visitation. KL III., 1997. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/J/Johanna%20Franciska.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

30 *Mária hű gyermeke [Faithful Daughter of Mary]* 1894. 163.

31 We know her name and some events from her life from the apocryphal gospel of James. According to this source the Virgin Mary's mother was childless for a long while. Legend had it that she was still alive when Jesus was born. She is the main patron saint of women struggling with various problems. KL I, 1993. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/A/Anna.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

32 Blessed Gizella was the wife of Stephen, the first Hungarian king. The Bavarian princess was a deeply religious woman and wanted to enter a monastery. At the wish of her parents she married the Hungarian king (985-1065?). KL IV, 1998. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/G/Gizella.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

33 Saint Blanka (1188-1252) was not officially canonised, but she was the object of such respect in public opinion that sainthood remains associated with her figure. KL I, 1993. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/B/Blanka.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

“[...] who said to her royal child: I would rather see you on your bier than know that you had wounded God with sin [...].”<sup>34</sup>

Finally, it is worth mentioning another two especially pious wives and mothers: Saint Elizabeth<sup>35</sup> and Frances Chantal. In the prayers addressed to their persons the emphasis is not on the more than average holiness of their lives, their miracles, mystical experiences of God, or their entry into an order, but on the qualities attainable for everyday women. In the case of Frances Chantal the prayer text presents the woman

“[...] who did everything for the upbringing of her children and lost the crown of sainthood [...]”,<sup>36</sup>

and we read the following about Saint Elizabeth:

“she did penance in the dress of a penitent, closely followed the upbringing of her children and valued the loss imposed on her by God more than the imperial crown.”<sup>37</sup>

As we have seen, Frances also appeared in other prayers, but as a young girl approaching marriage. Her example and the other stories cited show that the life history of the saints could be coloured and shaped practically to suit the required purpose. The main thing was the virtue the author wished to show and for this episodes in the life history had to be adapted or certain details given special stress.

The discourse on women at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century designated the place of women in the triple role of wife, mother and housewife. In this respect there was no difference of opinion between lay and church parlance. They both referred to women as “priestess of the household altar”, the “guardian of the home fireplace”, the “servant of the family altar”. These expressions also indicate that this role had almost sacral meaning.<sup>38</sup> It was therefore natural that the Catholic church held up the Virgin Mary as the most important example for its believers.<sup>39</sup> Mary the mother, wife of the carpenter, the parent raising children was given as the principal example to follow, as we can read in the prayer book “Glory! Peace!” written by the famous Hungarian Piarist priest, Sándor Sík:

“The real veneration of the Blessed Virgin is to take her above all as an example, ordering our lives according to her life. All Christians

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34 *Mária, légy anyám!* [*Mary, Be My Mother!*] 1938. 19-20.

35 The saint, known as Elizabeth of Hungary, or of Thuringia (1207-1231) was the daughter of the Hungarian King Andrew II and Queen Gertrude of Meran. Her husband was Ludwig, Landgrave of Thuringia with whom she lived in a happy marriage. They had three children. KL II, 1996. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/E/Erzs%C3%A9bet.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

36 *Mária, légy anyám!* [*Mary, Be My Mother!*] 1938. 19-20.

37 *Mária, légy anyám!* [*Mary, Be My Mother!*] 1938. 19-20.

38 PUKÁNSZKY 2006. 32.

39 McLEUD 1988. 152.

must strive for this: because Mary's life is a brief summary of all Christian duty and perfection. The faithful must constantly learn from this virgin what they must avoid, give up, correct, hold and practise.

It was God's intention in the life of Mary to give us an example and model of the most heroic virtues. Let us then meditate as often as possible on what Mary did and how, and we will find how effective her example is. It will serve us not only as a reliable rule in life, it will encourage and strengthen in us the beautiful, warm devoutness that was hers alone."<sup>40</sup>

Mary's life was well known, it would be difficult to find a more authentic or persuasive example to follow. In her veneration the church was able to turn towards women, and at the same time to hold up an acceptable, positive female image.<sup>41</sup> Obviously, it is not a matter of the creation of a new ideal, but rather of bringing certain qualities to the fore (motherhood, pious, obedient and humble woman), as we could also see in the case of the saints. We can read about this in the following prayer:

"May the immaculate example of the lily of purity, the Blessed Virgin Mary be always before my eyes so that I follow her footsteps in the path of life. She lived in modest solitude, submitting to your sacred will with all humility; gentleness, angelic purity and forbearance were the beautiful virtues that made her so dear in your sight; may I too strive to win your holy pleasure through those same virtues."<sup>42</sup>

The image of the virtuous Christian woman has been placed in the foreground, together with the earlier maternal figure of Mary the queen of heaven, mother of sorrows, intercessor and worker of miracles.<sup>43</sup>

"But above all follow Mary in her virtues, especially in her sacred purity. Abhor improper thoughts, desires, speech and deeds. Only she who strives to resemble her also in sacred purity truly venerates Mary."<sup>44</sup>

"To preserve your purity you must not only pray, you must also practise a degree of mortification. Besides the compulsory fasts, fast in honour of the Virgin Mary too. [...] Keep your eyes under control; it is dangerous to look at things you must not desire. [...] Read pious books, so that you can grow in faith and in your knowledge of the

40 *Dicsőség! Békeesség! [Glory! Peace!]* 1944. 626.

41 SCHLÖGL 1995. 17.

42 *Vezérszöveg az örök üdv elnyerésére [Lodestar to Eternal Salvation]* 1860. 380.

43 SCHLÖGL 1995. 37.

44 *Dicsértessék a Jézus Krisztus [Praised Be Jesus Christ]* 1891. 171.

religious ceremonies. [...] during amusements do not forget that you are a Christian and a follower of the Virgin Mary."<sup>45</sup>

"Preserve me, Oh Lord! from the main enemies of virginal innocence, from vanity and affectation. Close my ears and heart to words of flattery and temptation however free of danger they may seem. Stir up in me disdain and abhorrence for anything that would make me blush before myself and your all-seeing eyes."<sup>46</sup>

The prayer texts cited here, that were presented for young girls, clearly illustrate the lack of trust that characterised Catholic opinion of everything that belonged to the bourgeois world that was emerging at that time in which they saw the possibility of sin undermining morals. It raised as the principal example to follow the figure of Mary conceived immaculately and embodying Christian purity, virginity and obedience, as the counter pole to the symbolic figure of the period, the *femme fatale* tending to extremes, eroticism and sentimentalism. Accordingly, instilling an awareness of the "Marian" virtues came to play an important part in preparation for the life of a woman. This is indicated in the expressions "faithful daughter of Mary" and "children of Mary" that appear in the titles and texts of prayer books. This thought formed the main pillar of Catholic education for girls that was just beginning at that time. It functioned as a word of invitation that the clergy hoped would help the faithful, in the present case young girls and women, to resist the temptations of the age and stay far from the paths of sin. This was important, as the clergy saw that they could bring about the moral, religious and mental renewal of the entire society through the women and mothers. Placing Mary as the second, perfect Eve, in the centre underlined this teaching.

The dogma of the immaculate conception adopted at that time (1854) declared this idea of the church. The proclamation of the dogma and the "Marian century" that began with it were a good match for the internal consolidation of the church made necessary because of the secularisation processes.<sup>47</sup> In the opinion of Wolfgang Beinert, since the Counter-Reformation Mary appeared as the symbol of difference, of self-certainty and her figure was always evoked when Catholic identity and superiority were in need of reinforcement. The decline that could be observed in religious life throughout Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century again created such a situation.<sup>48</sup> Certain specifically Catholic religious teachings and forms of behaviour were revived in order to shape a uniform Catholic awareness and to strictly dissociate believers from the rival world-views. In this idea for the revival of Catholic life we can observe an unaccustomed dynamism of the Marian devotions and their mobilising power. Numerous confraternities were formed, World

45 *Mária kongreganisták kézikönyve* [Handbook of the Congregations of Mary] s.d., 89.

46 *Hajadonok őrangyala* [Guardian Angel of Single Women] 1858. 268.

47 The period began and ended with the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption (1950). This period saw a new flourishing and great popularity of the veneration of Mary that had been pushed into the background by the Enlightenment and rationalism. BEINERT 1984. 71-85; SÖVEGES 2007. 221-223.

48 On the growth of religious indifference see the literature cited in footnote 18.

Marian Congresses, Marian Saturdays, prayer nones, prayer eighths, and Marian five-year plans were organised.<sup>49</sup> Copies of votive statues were sent from place to place, nations were commended to the Heart of Mary, books on her life<sup>50</sup> and magazines<sup>51</sup> were published. New and frequent apparitions of Mary also further strengthened her cult.<sup>52</sup>

## Summing up

Reading the prayer texts one can feel how the members of the clergy strove to hold up examples for the women and girls among the believers that they thought could serve as an effective counterbalance to the attractive Noras, Madame Bovarys and Anna Kareninas of the period. They needed models with which women could identify that could unite in a single whole without contradictions the pious faith required by the church and the demand to preserve an everyday bourgeois existence.<sup>53</sup> This was not easily achieved: the roles of Catholic Christian and of urban bourgeois did not necessarily coincide. They were roles that could be chosen and combined in various ways, harmonising them required an effort from believers.<sup>54</sup> The members of the clergy gave clear guidance in this situation: become like the principal model, the Virgin Mary and copy her virtues (purity, obedience, renunciation) to become the priestess of the family altar. The authors of prayer and meditation texts also stressed the Marian virtues in the lives of the saints. They insisted on them because the only protection they saw in face of the dangers in the modern world lay in these strict bans. This view remained unchanged in the prayer books I examined from the end of the 1850s right up to the 1940s. But while in society we can observe the differentiation of many widely differing areas of life in the society, the church conserved its position, making it difficult to harmonise the various roles.

49 National congresses focusing on the person and veneration of Mary held during the period examined: Livorno 1895, Torino 1898, Lyon 1898; international congresses: Fribourg 1902, Rome 1904, Einsiedeln 1906, Zaragoza 1908, Salzburg 1910, Trier 1912. KL VIII., 2003. <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/M/M%C3%A1ria-tisztelet.html> Accessed on 1 December 2015.

50 The best known biographies of Mary in Hungary during this period were: MUNKAY, János: *A boldogságos Szűz Máriának élete* [Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary]. Pest, BUCSÁNSZKY, 1854; INTAY, Vazul András: *Jézus és Mária élete* [Lives of Jesus and Mary]. Pest, EMICH Gusztáv Nyomdája, 1867; LÉVAY, Mihály: *A boldogságos Szűz Mária élete, tisztelete, szenthelyei, legendái – művelt nagyközönség számára* [Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her veneration, shrines and legends – for the educated public]. Budapest, Franklin Társulat, 1935; KÜHÁR, Flóris: *Szűz Mária élete* [Life of the Virgin Mary]. Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 1938.

51 They included: *Nagyasszonyunk* [Our Lady], *Mária kongregáció*, [Congregation of Mary] *Rózsafüzér Királynője* [Queen of the Rosary], *Mária Virágoskertje* [Mary's Flower Garden].

52 Vision of Catherine Labouré – 1830, La Salette – 1846, Lourdes – 1854, Fatima – 1917.

53 SCHLÖGL 1995. 17.

54 SCHLÖGL 1993. 110-111.

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## CONFLICTS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN CSONGRÁD IN THE EARLY 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

### REACTIONS AND ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS

**Abstract:** The article examines the conflict-fraught tenure of János Mátyus as parish priest of Csongrád (1802-1827), and evaluates the consequences and the reactions of the parishioners. Above all, it seeks an answer to the question of the qualities on which a person was judged to be a “good priest”, who and what were regarded as incompatible with the ideal priest. How did the faithful express their disapproval of the priest who violated norms and how did the atypical behaviour of the Csongrád parish priest create what could be regarded as a collective “spiritual crisis situation”?

**Keywords:** lower clergy, Csongrád, norm and norm violation, lesser nobility, parish history

Historians and ethnologists in Hungary dealing with the social role of the lower clergy typically focus their analyses on questionable cases and conflicts that caused a stir.<sup>1</sup> The reason behind this is the assumption that atypical phenomena allow an insight into deep layers of social reality that, in the absence of conflict, would remain hidden.<sup>2</sup> Thus, community reactions to priestly norm violations can throw light on cultural and tradition-based aspects pointing beyond themselves, and reveal sensitive boundaries between norm and norm violation.<sup>3</sup>

In this study I examine the conflict-fraught tenure of János Mátyus as parish priest of Csongrád (1802-1827), and evaluate the reactions of the parishioners. I seek an answer to the question of the qualities on which someone was judged to be a “good priest”, and who was regarded as incompatible with the ideal of the good priest? How did the parishioners express their disapproval of the norm-violating priest and how did the atypical behaviour of the Csongrád parish priest create a kind of collective “spiritual crisis situation”?

I begin my analysis with a description of the town concerned, then of the parish priest János Mátyus. This is followed by the letters of complaint written about the parish priest and the grievances set out in the complaints, that is, the conflict

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: orsolyagyongyossy@gmail.com

1 See, for example. BEDNÁRIK 2013; GYÖNGYÖSSY 2014; HEGYI 2015; S. LACKOVITS 2012. On the research history and methodological problems of the topic, see: BÁRTH 2013.

2 See Edoardo GRENDI's *exceptionally* normal concept! SZÍJÁRTÓ M. 2006. 513.

3 BEDNÁRIK 2013. 223.

situations and the attempts to resolve them, and finally the reactions of the parishioners in Csongrád. The majority of my sources are ecclesiastical: letters written to the diocesan bishop of Vác, visitation protocols, Holy See (*Sancta Sedes*, Holy Chair or Episcopal See) interrogation records, less often newspaper articles and minutes of the local assembly.

## The town of Csongrád in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Csongrád was a Roman Catholic settlement inhabited by Hungarians. A census taken in 1827 found 11,283 persons in 1228 houses, among them ten Jews and two Protestants.<sup>4</sup> The majority of the inhabitants of Csongrád were serfs farming plots of land, and cotters on the big estates, but in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there had been an increase in the number of guilds.

The holder of the advowson<sup>5</sup> of the Saint Roche filial church in the Inner Town was the municipality, while in the case of the parish church of Our Lady it was the landowner count, the Károlyi family of Nagykároly. Csongrád had the appearance of a typical market town: it was surrounded by a giant ring of good quality plough land, with vineyards in the northern part, and lay beside the Tisza River, an abundant source of fish.

Our sources speak with recognition about the religious life of the people of Csongrád; the church was full to overflowing for mass, the many wayside crosses were well tended, charitable donations to the church were substantial. Veneration of the various patron saints of produce and farm animals was a special feature in the religious life of the population of fishermen and people who made a living from agriculture.<sup>6</sup>

The Franciscan fathers who came from the monastery in Kecskemét and a few from Szeged were permanent helpers of the Csongrád parish priests, self-sacrificing pastors of the parishioners. Already during Turkish times, their way of life won the support and sympathy of the people and this attachment further strengthened in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The superior of the Salvatorian monastery in Kecskemét<sup>7</sup> always ensured the presence of at least one mendicant brother in Csongrád, who was active as *procurator*<sup>8</sup> working for the salvation of the people living far from the church, among the isolated farms and filials: they

4 FÜZESI 1963-66, 189.

5 *Advowson*: A privilege granted by the pope or king, independent of land ownership. In a few places as late as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century patrons holding the advowson provided the parish properties and lands, built and repaired the church. When a vacancy arose they could make a proposal to the diocesan bishop regarding the successor. TOMISA 1997, 171.

6 For more detail on veneration of the saints in Csongrád, see: GYÖNGYÖSSY 2010.

7 *Szalvatorians, observant* (*Strictioris observantiae*): The aim of the trend that spread from Italy was a strict return to the rules laid down by Saint Francis. The movement appeared in Hungary in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. For more detail, see: MÁLYUSZ 2007, 272.

8 *Procurator*: Monk in charge of an alms or pastoral territory. M. KAT. LEX. IV. 751.

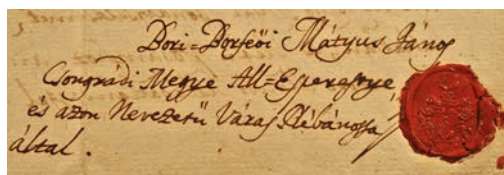
heard confession, conducted funerals, baptised, gave the last rites, and at the special request of the parish priest also said mass and preached.

At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century András Kanyó, a learned priest was the Csongrád parish priest. He devoted special attention to education for the common people, making sure they knew the church teachings and heard edifying sermons. András Kanyó was especially diligent in beautifying and enriching the church of Our Lady. He made a very effective speech calling for donations for the new bell and had it entered into the *Historia Domus*.<sup>9</sup> Kanyó died in exceptional circumstances: "He consecrated the big stone cross at the big church on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1802. The following day he died on the way to Vác, and now lies dead in Nagybony [...]. He died in 1802, but he is not dead, because he lives in his learning and zeal, in his piety and examples."<sup>10</sup> The people of Csongrád mourned their educated priest for a long while. After his death János Mátyus who was 42 years old at the time was transferred to Csongrád in 1802 from neighbouring Csépa.

### János Mátyus parish priest

The ancestors of parish priest János Mátyus (1761-1830) received their letters patent with armorial bearings<sup>11</sup> from King Rudolf in Prague in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> The family probably moved from Borfő beside the Bor river to Domony some time in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

We first come across the Mátyus family in documents related to the regulation of socage in Domony, as one of the seven land-owning families. According to the census of 1767-68, three serfs with plots of land and three cotter families lived on the estate owned by Pál, the elder brother of the parish priest Mátyus.<sup>13</sup> In 1808 40-year-old Pál Mátyus and his wife were listed as the owners; in 1820 the name of János Mátyus, then parish priest in Csongrád, appeared among the Domony land-owners.<sup>14</sup>



Signature of János Mátyus "Bori-Borfői" VPL APriv. Mátyus János, 1830's

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<sup>9</sup> Archive of the Parish of Our Lady, Csongrád (hereinafter: NPI) *Historia Domus*, vol. I.

<sup>10</sup> TARI 1977. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Noble with armorial bearings: A rank of nobility earned through feats of arms, it was not accompanied by a grant of land.

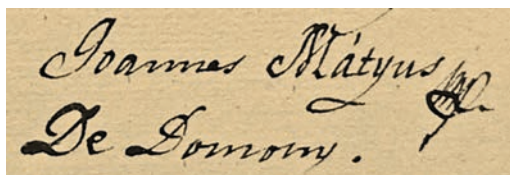
<sup>12</sup> NAGY 1857. 273-274.

<sup>13</sup> PÓR – ASZTALOS 1989. 112.

<sup>14</sup> For a brief overview of the members of the Mátyus family in Domony, see: PÓR – ASZTALOS 1989. 124-125.

We have no reliable information on the real wealth of the Mátyus family, we can only assume that they were a moderately well-to-do land-owning family. One thing is certain: in the period concerned the lack of land was a general problem in Domony, and the Mátyus estate was divided among at least<sup>15</sup> four children.

János Mátyus graduated from the seminary in Pest; his first appointment was as chaplain in Miskolc, then in Kiskunfélegyháza, from 1792 he was parish priest of Csépa. With a helping hand from József Steösszel, captain of the Jazygians and Cumans, János Mátyus was transferred to the suddenly vacant position at the head of the Csongrád parish.<sup>16</sup> It is clear from the dossier on his person containing hundreds of pages accumulated during his years in Csongrád that the people of the town did not feel honoured by his presence. In 1825 the Bishop of Vác, tired of the complaints from parishioners, forced János Mátyus to resign from the parish.<sup>17</sup> The former parish priest went into retirement in Domony where he spent the remaining three years of his life trying to contrive his return to Csongrád.



Another form of signature: János Mátyus "de Domony" VPL APriv. MÁTYUS János, 1830's

Now, let us examine in brief points exactly what those letters of complaint and the testimony recorded by the canons of Vác contained concerning the reasons for the crisis in the Csongrád church community, and that described the actual conflicts.

## Norm violations and complaints

The letters of complaint about parish priest Mátyus and the testimony recorded set out in detail the problems that arose in Csongrád in the performance of liturgical and pastoral duties.

### 1) *The neglect of pastoral tasks*

If none of the three chaplains was at home, the parish priest made the infant to be baptised or the sick person to receive the last rites wait until one of them

<sup>15</sup> The names of four siblings appear in the available sources: Pál, János, Erzsébet and András, but it cannot be excluded that there were also other inheritors.

<sup>16</sup> TARI 1977. 13.

<sup>17</sup> CHOBOT 1917. 839.

returned. Personal tragedies occurred because of this, people died without confession.<sup>18</sup> He himself only administered a sacrament (baptism, marriage, last rites), generally to more prosperous townsfolk or guild members, in exchange for a gift.<sup>19</sup> If he was to say mass, he began almost an hour late. In winter this annoyed the people of Csongrád because of the cold, in summer because of the time lost from work.<sup>20</sup> Another complaint made against him was that he allowed his chaplains to say only two masses a day which meant that the church was crowded on these occasions; people were pressed together, someone always fainted.<sup>21</sup>

## 2) *The neglect of religious education*

According to the letters of complaint the Csongrád parish priest never gave religious education or spiritual teaching,<sup>22</sup> he neglected the cause of enlightening the people. Indeed: if he wanted to convince the faithful of something at any cost, he would draw on popular superstitions. When János Mátyus heard that a family in mourning did not want to have an expensive Requiem mass<sup>23</sup> said, he warned them that they would deeply regret the decision, “when the soul returning home props a sack against the door, throws down the pots in the kitchen”.<sup>24</sup>

## 3) *Arbitrarily imposing and raising surplice fees*

In addition to the fees set out in the *Canonica Visitatio*,<sup>25</sup> János Mátyus introduced new “taxes”. In the 1820s–30s he asked parishioners to pay 1 forint as *waiting money* to hear the cantor sing the funeral valediction; he gave half of this sum to the chaplain performing the service – “if he remembered”.<sup>26</sup> For a wedding

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18 “If the respected parish priest was called to hear confession [...] he would not go, but said that the chaplains would come [...] [in this way] two women died without the last rites.” Vác Episcopal and Capitular Archive, *Acta Privatorum* (hereinafter: VPL APriv.) János Mátyus, 16 May 1823. Letter from the Magistrate and Council of Csongrád to the Episcopal See of Vác.

19 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol, testimony of József Urgasz.

20 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate of Csongrád to the Bishop of Vác.

21 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol, testimony of András MAKAI.

22 “He does not hold spiritual teaching for young people, instruction in religion obviously suffers and they grow up without it.” VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate of Csongrád to the Bishop of Vác.

23 *Requiem mass*: lat. “rest”. This was the name given after the Council of Trent to the mass said in black vestments for the repose of the souls of the dead. The requiem mass was given its name from the first word of the *introit*, the first prayer: *Requiem in aeternam dona eis Domine* (Grant them eternal rest, O Lord). M. KAT. LEX. XI. 2006. 574.

24 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate of Csongrád to the Bishop of Vác.

25 *Canonica Visitatio*: lat. “canonical visitations”, the inspection of parishes. In Hungary we have data from the 12<sup>th</sup> century on protocols written by bishops or vicars general, covering questions compiled by the bishop. The Council of Trent (1545–63) regulated the course and frequency of such visitations. TOMISA 2002.

26 APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1824. Testimony of chaplain Ferenc Kovács.

on Sunday two large hens were added to the usual fees.<sup>27</sup> He charged 20 forints for the consecration of new guild banners, and 10 forints for the banners of the “ancient guilds” to be placed in the church sanctuary. News of the unusual extra income being demanded by the Csongrád parish priest reached the bailiff of the Károlyi estate who called on the guilds to refuse payment.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4) *Violation of religious commands*

In return for a suitable payment parish priest Mátyus was prepared to overstep even the most basic church regulations. He set his fee for a wedding during Lent at 15 forints.<sup>29</sup> If the church service ordered was not in the end provided, he did not refund the payment, saying: “it is difficult to prise out anything that falls into the hands of the priests”. When the son of the guild master Pál Miskoltzi died, the service was conducted in “ordinary” vestment instead of a black cope; the parish priest offered to count the difference towards the costs if his other child died. There were problems at other times too with the respect of church regulations. Witnesses claimed they saw the parish priest’s servants carrying water, stripping corn, baking bread on feast days or Sundays, that is, breaking the Sabbath.<sup>30</sup>

#### 5) *Violation of moral norms*

All these shortcomings and “transgressions” appear to be especially serious sins, given that the parish priest was considered to be the chief guardian of moral order. People turned to him if discord arose between marriage partners, if justice had to be done in family affairs, to persuade people to drop grievances against others. If parishioners turned to a priest with a complaint concerning their private affairs, the general procedure was for the priest to examine the complaint and then call the parties concerned to discuss the matter together. But according to the letters of complaint, in return for a calf parish priest Mátyus did not call in the party in the wrong, for example the wife who had fled, or the husband who had committed adultery.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 16 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate and council of Csongrád to the Vác Episcopal See.

<sup>28</sup> “I wished to have our banners moved from the rear of the church to the sanctuary, so that new guilds that have registered themselves do not place their banners before ours and so gain priority in some form.” VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of János Úveges. For further details of the affair, see: Gyöngyössi 2013.

<sup>29</sup> VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of László Ketskés.

<sup>30</sup> VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 16 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate and council of Csongrád to the Vác Episcopal See. See also: VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Veronika Lovas.

<sup>31</sup> VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of András Makai.

The parish priest himself was suspected of fornication in three cases. First a girl working as a servant of the rectory gave birth to a child from an unknown father<sup>32</sup>, then the priest's housekeeper, a woman called Lizi, although she was a married woman, twice remained in the rectory when she gave birth. The witnesses named this housekeeper as the main cause of the local disputes as the parish priest took her word unconditionally. Ignoring the annoyance of parishioners, János Mátyus drove around the streets of Csongrád in a carriage with his housekeeper. Once after a funeral he seated Lizi beside himself in the carriage, in place of his chaplains. As József Urgasz, former Csongrád chaplain, said in his testimony:

"If someone has any business at the rectory, he first goes to the cook because they say that 'Lizi can arrange everything'".<sup>33</sup>

When the housekeeper was sick, the parish priest nursed her, on one occasion in the presence of several witnesses, he rubbed fat on her<sup>34</sup>.

### 6) Violation of the norms of social contact

János Mátyus was also accused of paying no attention to the opinion of parishioners and behaving insensitively. On one occasion, claiming that he was ill, he left his chaplains to conduct the Easter Resurrection mass. During the mass he drove out to the rectory's farm with his sister, and returned to Csongrád just as the procession was beginning. When

"the people were praying with the greatest piety outside the church, without deviating from his path, disturbing them in their devotions, he practically drove his carriage through their midst".<sup>35</sup>

In many cases the witnesses spoke of the parish priest swearing. This in itself is scandalous, but is even more so if the priest mentioned the devil or sexual things – and according to the witnesses this happened regularly.<sup>36</sup>

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32 "The Csongrád parish priest not only freely fornicated with Judith Frajstadt, a young servant girl, but when this girl became pregnant, after her maternal instincts were stamped out she caused herself to have a miscarriage and buried the foetus in the yard of the rectory". VPL APriv. János MÁTYUS, 3 November 1807. Testimony given in Szegvár, at the court judging prisoners in Csongrád county (János LÉVAI TÓTH).

33 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of József Urgasz.

34 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Mrs Mihály Eszes née Katalin CSORDÁS. *Rubbing*: A special form of healing in which the patient's body was massaged, pressed or stroked either dry or damp (with oil), at times with medicinal herbs. See: MAGYAR NÉPRAJZI LEXIKON [HUNGARIAN ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ETHNOLOGY], under the heading "gyógyító" (healing). <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/2-830.html>. Accessed on 08 November 2015.

35 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 16 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate and council of Csongrád to the Vác Episcopal See.

36 VPL APriv. János Mátyus 12 August 1825. Investigation protocol. Testimony of János Seres.



In addition to all this we must mention the parish priest's nature: he did not tolerate contradiction and was quick to anger. He beat his servants<sup>37</sup> or anyone who aroused his anger, with a stick, a pizzle, or his own hands. A number of similar cases came before the municipality and the Vác episcopal see.<sup>38</sup> János Czimmermann, a hatter, had the town's surgeon draw up a description of the injuries caused to him by the parish priest,<sup>39</sup> then travelled in person with this certificate to Vác, to have him called to account. Despite an investigation drawn out over several years, the hatter remained without compensation for the case that had cost him close to 1000 forints in expenses.

The event that finally led to the suspension of János Mátyus was when he chased his chaplains Rosemerszky and Géczi with a bayoneted rifle around the rectory but he tripped and they escaped. There is a thick dossier of papers on the case in the Vác Episcopal and Capitular Archive. It is an indication of the significance of the case that it was recorded in peasant diaries, even though the facts there are not correct.<sup>40</sup>

## Conflicts and reactions

Now, let us see how the parishioners evaluated the parish priest's behaviour, what their attitude to it was and what they did to remedy the situation.

Comparisons to the parish priest, spread by word of mouth are formulas that aptly express and report on the problems. Speaking of the parish priest who sent children home without baptism, the midwives said that

"it would be easier to tempt the dragon out of its cave than the Reverend father from his house".<sup>41</sup>

Even more frequent remarks were made about the parish priest's neglect of his duties:

"People grumbled, saying: Shame! Shame, he should carry the Sacrament on such an important day, not go out to the farm".<sup>42</sup>

37 "That the Reverend Father is full of anger I know from my own experience, as he often threatens me with his sword in the stable, once he stabbed me in my side with the sword and if God had not taken such care of me, I do not know what would have happened." VPL APriv. János Mátyus 12 August 1825. Investigation protocol. Testimony of József Horváth, rectory coachman.

38 "In 1808 he [János Mátyus] grievously beat József Angyal, a soldier, who approached the municipality with a request for compensation" Füzesi 1963-66. 181.

39 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 6 August 1822. Certificate on the injuries suffered by János CZIMMERMANN, a hatter, signed by András Werner, Tamás Bernitzky surgeons.

40 "On 18 August 1825, dean János Mátyus brawled with chaplain Rozembertzki. For which dean János Mátyus was summoned to Vác and remained there." Tari 1977.

41 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Pál Miskoltzi.

42 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Pál Miskoltzi.



The next stage was to make written complaints about the parish priest, at first to the local magistracy, then to the diocesan bishop. The most detailed letter was written on 10 July 1823 on the basis of complaints made to the Csongrád town council. The letter was composed jointly by the magistrate and the notary, it was then read in the general assembly, approved by the council members, and sent in the town's own carriage to the Vác Episcopal See.<sup>43</sup> The accusations essentially include the norm violations outlined in the previous chapter. The diocesan bishop instructed Vác diocesan arch-deacons to conduct an investigation into the contents of the letter. The questions were drawn up by the Vác Episcopal See and the investigation could not depart from them. The arch-deacons came in pairs to Csongrád to record the testimony of as many as 30-40 witnesses. Successive investigations were carried out, either because of new complaints that arose, or for a revision of testimony – the latter was always requested by the Csongrád parish priest. The episcopal investigation<sup>44</sup> resulted in further sources, protocols and testimonies.

A great part of both the letters of complaint and the testimonies describes the state of mind of the community, stressing the emotional harm:

“Generally speaking, everyone feels a deep hatred for János Mátyus dean and Csongrád parish priest [...] No one has the slightest trust, affection or respect for him, his parishioners appear before him out of duty, in fear and trembling.”<sup>45</sup>

The outline of the state of mind is followed by a detailed account of the specific case, with names and place, set out in points for the Holy See.

The letters and testimonies generally end with requests and suggested solutions. In the case of János Mátyus they regarded a transfer or retirement as an acceptable alternative:

“We humbly beseech that you send and appoint another parish priest in his [János Mátyus's] place”.<sup>46</sup>

“The people often say they wish he would be taken away; if only he would go away to rest in his old age, God willing. People

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43 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 2 March 1825. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Pál Kása.

44 In disciplinary matters involving priests, the diocesan bishop judged through the regional vicar general and the Episcopal Holy See Court (in terminology of the period: *Szentszék* – Holy See). Accordingly, the priest's immediate superior was the regional vicar general delegated with (transferred) power by the diocesan bishop. It was the task of the regional vicar general to coordinate the work of the priests in his district, supervise the church and liturgical order, and visit all the parishes at least once a year. He is the one who could conduct hearings and inspections in disciplinary matters involving priests. During the period examined here the parish priests of Csongrád belonged under the supervision of the vicar general of Hódmezővásárhely.

45 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of József Urgasz.

46 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 7 July 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate and council of Csongrád to the Vác Episcopal See.

think that he will go to Vác as a chaplain, or that he will retire to Domony"<sup>47</sup>.

According to his former chaplain János Mátyus was unfit for priestly service because of his cruelty, while others thought the "derangement" of his mind made him unfit.<sup>48</sup>

At times the witnesses make threats regarding what would happen if the episcopal see did not act in the case:

"People are so discontented that, if he remains among us, we will all become Lutherans."<sup>49</sup>

The threat of conversion was not always just empty words: in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the inhabitants of a settlement in Transdanubia converted to the Calvinist faith to free themselves of their hated priest.<sup>50</sup> We do not know of any individual or group conversions in Csongrád during that period.

The latter János Czimmermann who was beaten blamed the parish priest's cruelty and the chaplain's procrastination for the crisis of his pious spiritual life:

"Reckon before God for the fact that *I lost my faith* because the Priest, out of pride and anger drove his poor sheep undeservedly out of the holy fold that he vowed to serve in the name of Jesus Christ, giving him to the wolf and never bringing him back"<sup>51</sup>.

Parallel with the growing discontent of the parishioners, passive resistance against the parish priest also increased. The number of persons attending mass fell, especially among inhabitants from the more distant filials who declined to make the long trip. Some of those who came for mass grew tired of waiting and left after half an hour. Because the parish priest demanded a substantial sum for the consecration of wayside crosses there was a sharp decline in donations of this nature, and some of the newly erected crosses went for years without being consecrated.<sup>52</sup> In the final analysis the dissatisfaction of parishioners was manifested in a decline in the practice of religion.<sup>53</sup>

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47 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 2 March 1825. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Pál Jusztin.

48 "In general it is his belief that he is totally unsuited to be a priest because he is exceedingly cruel." VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 12 August 1825. Investigation protocol. Testimony of chaplain János Seres. "I see from his gaze, his deeds and his speech that he is no longer in his right mind." VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Pál Miskoltzi.

49 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Mihály Gyarmati.

50 Information from Emőke S. Lackovits.

51 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 9 January 1826. Letter from János Czimmermann, hatter, to the Csongrád chaplain.

52 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 16 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate and council of Csongrád to the Vác Episcopal See.

53 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 16 May 1823. Letter from the municipal magistrate and council of Csongrád to the Vác Episcopal See.

## Society's judgement of the "disorderly" parish priest and attempts to resolve the conflict

A number of testimonies summed up the performance of János Mátyus in a single word, *disorderly*, or rather, a lack of order.<sup>54</sup> The failure to respect moral norms endangered the community's traditional norms and weakened it; this fear for the moral order can also be felt from the complaints made by parishioners:

"Because of him [i.e. the parish priest] people now feel that they are free to swear, fornicate, commit adultery, act violently, work on the Sabbath, etc."<sup>55</sup>

The judgement of János Mátyus was aggravated by the fact that the majority of parishioners in Csongrád had accepted and were sincerely fond of his predecessor. In a number of letters they compare the old and new order – or rather, the lack of order (autocracy) – measuring the actions of János Mátyus against those of András Kanyó.<sup>56</sup> As the agricultural labourer Jakab Takács said in his testimony:

"We have all become estranged from him [from János Mátyus] because the good order that existed under the deceased Reverend father Kanyó no longer exists."<sup>57</sup>

This series of shortcomings was compounded by the conflict-prone personality of János Mátyus, his quick-tempered, aggressive nature that was only further strengthened by his *sense of himself as a noble*.

The picture of the Csongrád parish priest that emerges from the letters faithfully reflects all the stereotypes of behavioural sociology that are generally repeated in connection with the minor nobility of the period. They include aggressiveness, the abuse of power and an exaggerated sense of self-importance. Earlier, as parish priest of Csépa, the only curial (noble) village in the neighbouring micro-region of Tiszazug, he had declared that:

"I am two nobles, I can beat a nobleman too."<sup>58</sup>

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54 "He does not keep any order at all in the service of the Lord"; [...] there is no order in his office." VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Mihály Szabó and Jakab Takács.

55 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Jakab Takács.

56 It is rarely stressed that there is almost never a *tabula rasa* for a community's spiritual leader; he naturally joins in the chain of local tradition and memory. He has to face and deal with points of reference, memory patterns, reflections and comparisons regarding his predecessor in office. His tasks and the area requiring pastoration also depend on the "legacy" left to him.

57 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Jakab Takács.

58 VPL APriv. János Mátyus. 23 August 1799. Investigation protocol. Testimony of János Szilágyi.

He regarded himself as noble both by virtue of his ancestors, and of his membership of the priesthood.

Coming from Csépa to Csongrád, a settlement inhabited largely by serfs and cotters, he spoke with undisguised disdain of the parishioners he called “unworthy, shabby” peasants, including among them the town magistrate, the councilors and all those who gave testimony against him.<sup>59</sup> In two letters he wrote from Csongrád, he cites a passage from Werbőczy’s *Tripartitum*<sup>60</sup> that says in essence:

“He who believes a peasant, is worse than a murderer.”<sup>61</sup>

The solution was to keep alive the proposal and constantly push for the parish priest’s transfer, and also to make increasing use of the chaplains and the mendicant Franciscan father active in the district. After a while, not only did the parish priest refuse to administer the sacraments, whenever they could the parishioners preferred to turn to the mendicant Franciscan father and the chaplains. Another possibility was to approach other parish priests in the area; there are sources recording this practice.<sup>62</sup>

We can only suspect the reasons for the lenient behaviour of the Vác Episcopal See. It is certain that in his letters János Mátyus made numerous references to his influential acquaintances, his excellent relations with the Károlyi estate, and his kinship ties to the Steöszel family in Tiszaug. The contradictory attitude of the fellow archdeacons and chaplains conducting the investigation is also instructive. For example, after the suspension of János Mátyus, in one of his letters György Nagy archdeacon and parish priest in Cegléd tried to convince the Bishop of Vác that exiling parish priest Mátyus to Domony would do more harm to the judgement of the lower clergy than leaving him unmolested in Csongrád. As he put it:

“The Hungarian Catholic priesthood is the first in the world among the bright stars of the round heavens and [it is my wish that] this shining light should not be further dimmed by removing Mr János Mátyus from the true Church of Jesus Christ.”<sup>63</sup>

59 Csongrád County Archive of the Hungarian National Archive, Csongrád Branch Archive (hereinafter: MNL CsML CsL) Cs. V.B. 42.e. The people of Csongrád recognised as “real” nobles only members of the family of the former landlord-holder of avowson, who did not even have residences in the settlement and whose visits were a real sensation. The social weight of the nobles listed in the birth registers was insignificant. In 1829 only 53 nobles had the right to vote in Csongrád. FÜZESI 1963-66. 190.

60 The “Tripartite Book” (*Tripartitum*) of István Werbőczy completed in 1514 was a collection of the feudal laws on Hungary in that period; it remained in use right up to 1848. See: CSIKY 1899.

61 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, s.d. 1824. Letter from János Mátyus to the Bishop of Vác.

62 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 10 July 1823. Investigation protocol. Testimony of Mihály Gyarmati.

63 VPL APriv. János Mátyus, 19 July 1826. Letter from György Nagy, archdeacon, parish priest of Cegléd to the Bishop of Vác.

In the end his plan to return to Csongrád was not realised; because of his deteriorating physical condition János Mátyus was unable even to travel to Vác to have his contested cases heard.

After the departure of Mátyus the Csongrád parishioners “looked for a priest for themselves”: they chose László Szabó then serving in Kiskundorozsma, whose personal qualities were known to them because he had earlier been a chaplain in Csongrád for four years. He promised to be excellently suited to carry on the spiritual guidance of the Csongrád parish community from where András Kanyó left it in 1802 – but that is another story.

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## IDENTITIES SIDE BY SIDE

### THE PRACTICE OF FAITH IN DENOMINATIONALLY MIXED MARRIAGES<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The study examines denominationally mixed marriages in five villages in the vicinity of Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfîntu Gheorghe, Romania) and how the practice of faith is manifested there. Centuries-old legal practices related to weddings, christenings, funerals, church attendance and everyday life are still alive and are shaped by the policy of the Roman Catholic church and by ethnic and denominational identity. Families' practice of faith can be grouped into four types: equal rights, assimilative, patriarchal and Catholic.

**Keywords:** denomination, multiconfessionality, marriage, christening, funeral, church attendance, diversity, conflicts and their resolutions, Hungarians, Romanians

In one of his studies Miklós Tomka, sociologist of religion stated that "in the course of European and American development the church was far from being the all-dominant reality that had earlier been supposed. Recurring irreligiousness, religious revivals, denominational battles and temporary periods of peace succeeded each other over the centuries."<sup>2</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century we can observe one such process of turning away from religion: perhaps we can speak not of general irreligiousness but rather of a complete transformation in the quality of religion. Luckmann called this qualitative change "the privatisation of religion",<sup>3</sup> but we could also call it the "domestication" of religious life. In 1995, discussing the changes following the Romanian revolution, Zoltán A. Bíró and Endre Túros also noted the loss of ground in the role of religion, concluding that the formalisation of the relationship between church and society was continuing and would become increasingly striking in the following decade. At the same time they also indicated that the

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\* Székely Nemzeti Múzeum, STRADA Kós Károly 10, SFÂNTU Gheorghe 520055, România. Email: szocsnegazdaeniko.szn@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> I carried out this research in part with a grant in 2011 from the BETHLEN Gábor Fund. I wish to thank them for their support. In 2014 I reported on the results of the research focused on the village of Árkos/Arcuş in a paper I presented to the conference on *Manifestations of Identity in the Early 21st Century* organised by the Kiss Lajos Ethnographical Society of Serbia. The paper will appear in Hungarian in the conference publication.

<sup>2</sup> TOMKA s.d. 2.

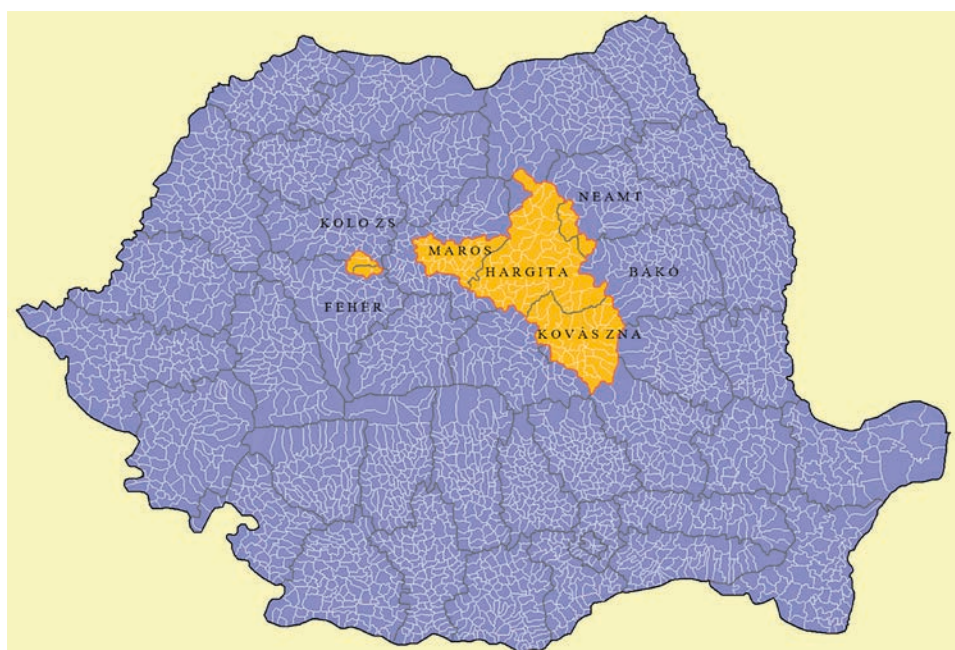
<sup>3</sup> LUCKMANN s.d.



more rigid attitude towards the Church as an institution did not mean a complete turning away from religion, only the radical transformation of religious life.<sup>4</sup>

It is precisely the changes in religious life following the Romanian revolution (1989) that indicate that this process was not only a function of the measures banning religion under communism, it was at the same time also a concomitant of the alienating, money-oriented way of life. The individualism continuously reshaping the world schematised all forms of communication, it reduced the occasions when people living in the same settlement met, and transformed both their festive days and weekdays. In fact the crisis can be felt most intensively not in the life of the churches but in the communities.

This hypothesis was the point of departure for my research when I examined: what is left of religion as a socially determined set of norms? How do families, the micro-units of society, live their religious life? I concentrated mainly on the forms of religious practice within denominationally mixed marriages. The basic method used in my fieldwork was in-depth interviews. I spoke at length with 26 denominationally mixed families in five settlements.<sup>5</sup> They signalled the main directions



The Székelyföld region within the territory of present-day Romania  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tört\\_Székelyfő\(hun\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tört_Székelyfő(hun).png)

4 BÍRÓ A. – TÚROS 2005. 108.

5 The area in which the research was carried out has been part of Romania only since 1920, earlier it was part of the territory defending the eastern borders of Hungary. The population of the area is still 80% Hungarian, the name of the current public administration unit is Covasna county. The five settlements where more intensive research was conducted were: Árkos/Arkus, Kálnok/Calnic, Sepsikőröspatak/Valea Crișului, Kökös/Chinchiș, Sepsikilyén/Chilieni.

that are the major factors of denominationality in the awareness of people today, the most important forms of the manifestation of identity. Many further brief conversations added nuances to this basic picture, mainly helping to understand the process and to assess frequencies. Members of the units of micro society that still operate religious life today, families and their members, spoke about the religious patterns, their socialisation, and the centuries-old conflict management solutions used by multiconfessional societies, their timeliness today, the agreements between marriage partners on religious practice, and the directions perceived by ordinary people with a denominational mindset. My interlocutors themselves indicated the thematic groups of my analysis. These conversations also clearly indicated the cognitive context in which the ordinary person thinks about religion. Villagers in the Sepsiszek micro-region do not see religion and denominationality as an ideological-dogmatic system, but rather as behaviour patterns, or even as socio-cultural constructs that determine the directions of their everyday actions.<sup>6</sup>

We know that in many villages of the region two or three denominations were present in almost equal proportions already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup> and – with the exception of the Greek Catholics who have disappeared – they have survived right up to the present.<sup>8</sup>

### **The practice of faith in rites**

Religion – as Jürgen Habermas also noted – is closely linked to ritual practice, what distinguishes religious discourse from theological discourse is that it is rooted in the cult, while the latter is separate from ritual practice.<sup>9</sup> Nowadays it is no longer obligatory for the individual to participate in these ritual occasions. Marriages can be contracted without church rites, just as the church initiation of young children (christening) or the officiation of priests at burials are no longer a constraint. The fact that the people of the Sepsiszek area still turn to the church in the milestones of their lives is an indication that they do not accept the full secularisation of life.

In denominationally mixed families, the ways in which the members participate in church rites are determined on the one hand by individual decisions and on the other by family or community norms. The choice of church for marriage and christening and of cemetery for burial only appears to be independent of community practice. Centuries-old customs and old laws try to ensure that individual interests or denominational struggles do not disturb the sacrality of the rite.

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6 Cf. ANTONEN 2004. 8.

7 For a brief summary of the religious history of the Háromszék region see: CSIFÓ 1899.

8 See VARGA 2001. The Greek Catholic denomination was banned in Romania in 1949, after which most of its followers were integrated into the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox church.

9 HABERMAS 2007. 127.

### 1) *Choice of partner, wedding*

By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bitter denominational conflicts had entirely disappeared from this region, the denominations lived side by side and there were increasing examples of coexistence within families. Records of births, marriages and deaths show that in three-denominational Kőkös (Unitarian, Calvinist, Orthodox) by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Orthodox had lost their ethnic identity and had become Hungarianised. In this village with a very mixed population parents tolerated denominationally mixed marriages that accounted for 44% of all marriages. Within the norms followed in Kőkös there were cases in families with a stronger denominational identity where the young man's parents tried to persuade the girl to change to their denomination. Denominational endogamy had less force also in Árkos and Kálnok. This can be seen in the fact that many mixed marriages can be found already in the early records. In a few predominantly Calvinist zones the smaller Unitarian community was already on the path of natural assimilation. This was found for example in Sepsikillyén: at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was still a filial in Sepsikillyén of the parent church community in Sepsiszentgyörgy, with a substantial Unitarian population. However, since the area around the village (Szotyor/Coşeni, Uzon/Ozun, Illyefalva/Ilieni, Sepsiszentgyörgy) was predominantly Calvinist, the church community began a process of rapid assimilation; today only 17 persons in this village regard themselves as Unitarians. Árkos was able to preserve its Unitarian majority because it had established a system of marriage ties linked not to neighbouring Sepsiszentgyörgy, but to Bölön/Belin and Nagyajta/Aita Mare, villages with a Unitarian majority on the other side of the mountain, and to Sepsikőröspatak and Kálnok with substantial Unitarian populations.

When we examine mixed marriage families today and their behaviour patterns, it is striking to find that the identity is not of equal intensity in a Calvinist-Unitarian, compared to a Roman Catholic-Unitarian or Orthodox-Calvinist marriage. One woman living in a mixed denominational marriage<sup>10</sup> did not feel her own state to be a mixed marriage at all, even though she was Unitarian and her husband Calvinist:

“What would be mixed when a Unitarian and a Calvinist marry?  
The two religions are almost the same.”

In Sepsikőröspatak where the majority are Roman Catholics it was only the older women who mentioned that their parents were not happy with the choice of a partner from a different denomination.<sup>11</sup> Today mixed marriages are regarded as most delicate in cases where the denominational differences also coincide with ethnic differences. Marriages with Orthodox ethnic Romanians are still received

<sup>10</sup> VE, female, b. 1956, Árkos, Unitarian.

<sup>11</sup> Szl, female, b. 1941, Sepsikőröspatak, Calvinist.

with intolerance by the community: for a population in an ethnic minority situation the strengthening of ethnocentrism and maintaining an awareness of dissociation from those with a different language is obviously the most important way to struggle against assimilation. The families concerned speak with shame of their failure to persuade the young people and are very resentful if the young couple decide to marry in the Orthodox church. Marriages between followers of the more recent minor churches and sects and members of the historical churches are also felt to be problematic: in these cases the member of the minor church generally assimilates the partner belonging to a historical church, in an effort to increase their own legitimacy. This can be clearly observed in Sepsikőröspatak for example, where there are quite a large number of Jehovah's Witnesses and members of the Cheerful Sunday group known as *clappers*. When I asked about families where, for example, one partner was a Cheerful Sunday follower and the other a Catholic they were not able to cite a single case because members of the traditional church left their denomination already during the period of courtship.

## 2) *The wedding venue*

An examination of the marriage records for the Háromszék region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century shows that it was practically a general rule among Hungarians that the couple went to the church of the bride's denomination for the marriage ceremony. In Kálnok for example, a combined examination of the Calvinist and Unitarian registry records shows that 89% of marriage ceremonies were held in the bride's church; of the 70 weddings examined, only 8 were held in the groom's church.<sup>12</sup> According to the combined data of the Sepsikillyén Unitarian and Calvinist churches, 97.3% of marriage ceremonies were held in the bride's church.<sup>13</sup> The records examined show different ratios in a few church communities at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: in Kökös in the case of the Unitarian church, 42% of mixed marriages were contracted in the groom's church and only 58% in the bride's church. Since the registry records of the Kökös Calvinist denomination both before and after this period indicate that the custom of "bride's priest marries" was followed, it seems likely that this difference was due not to a departure from the village's custom but rather to the presence and service of a more intolerant priest or one spreading a stronger denominational identity.<sup>14</sup>

The marriage ceremony was held in the groom's church mainly in cases where the groom stubbornly insisted on his own religion. As a woman in Kálnok recalled her wedding:

"I am Calvinist, yes, but we were married only in the Unitarian church. [...] We did not for a moment consider marrying anywhere

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12 Sepsiszentgyörgy State Archive, F. 105/185, F. 105/188.

13 Sepsiszentgyörgy State Archive, F. 105/240, F. 105/242.

14 Sepsiszentgyörgy State Archive, F. 105/233, F. 105/235.

else, and my son too was christened there. It was taken for granted that he would be Unitarian. My husband is a staunch Unitarian, he is a church warden too."<sup>15</sup>

They also married in the groom's church if the bride was a Roman Catholic but was remarrying after a divorce. In this case the change of the wedding venue was determined by the Catholic church's rejection.<sup>16</sup> Couples married according to the groom's religion also in cases where the girl's parents for some reason "bore a grudge against the priest"<sup>17</sup> or if there was no priest in the village at the time of the wedding in the church to which the bride belonged.<sup>18</sup> In Kökös Hungarianised followers of the Orthodox religion rarely married partners of their own denomination, and in cases of mixed marriages generally went to the Hungarian church. In this case, holding the wedding ceremony in the groom's church was a clear sign of assimilation:

"There are 10–15 families who speak Hungarian and are Orthodox. It was very rare for a Romanian to marry a Romanian, around one girl out of three married an Orthodox. If it was a mixed marriage it was usually held in the Hungarian church. After all, they associated with Hungarians, so they went to a Hungarian church too."<sup>19</sup>

The case of the Unitarians of Sepsikillyén was also an indication of assimilation: since there were far more Calvinists in the village, almost without exception Unitarians or Roman Catholics were married in the Calvinist church.

The introduction of the Catholic "reverzális" (pledge) brought a radical change in the marriage customs. They began to oblige brides belonging to a Protestant denomination to visit the husband's church after the wedding in their own church and to go through the marriage ceremony there too, undertaking an obligation to have their children christened as Roman Catholics. In the strongly Catholic Kőröspatak the question of marriage in both churches and the pledge was still a cause of disputes in the sixties.<sup>20</sup> Since it was not the Calvinist who refused the pledge but the Catholic who was punished by the church (they could not take communion), the marriage system was transformed under external pressure: either they went to both churches, or they married only in the Catholic church. In the seventies the most frequent solution was to marry in both churches, and this model also radically transformed the Protestant marriage customs. Because a big and lavish wedding satisfied the demands of the partners for outward show, the two-wedding model contributed to the disintegration of the earlier custom.

15 CS, female, b. 1954, Kálnok, Calvinist.

16 KPS, female, b. 1941, Sepsikőröspatak, Calvinist.

17 SBE, female, b. 1922, Kálnok, Unitarian.

18 SBE, female, b. 1922, Kálnok, Unitarian.

19 AFM, female, b. 1955, Kökös, Orthodox.

20 SZI, female, b. 1941, Sepsikőröspatak, Calvinist.

## 2) *The choice of the children's religion*

One of the biggest tests of strength in mixed marriages was the birth of children and the subsequent christening rite. It was perhaps in order to avoid conflicts over the choice of the children's religion that the old custom produced its own variant: it was the old rule that daughters followed their mother's religion and sons the father's. This norm was generally applied for example in Árkos: Between 1892 and 1899 the local Calvinist church registered children from 11 mixed marriages, and they were all christened according to the denomination of the parent of their gender. The Unitarian church registered children from 24 mixed marriages between 1884 and 1889<sup>21</sup>, of which 23 followed the religion of the parent of the same gender.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the Calvinists in Kökös, between 1886 and 1893 the children of 21 mixed marriages were christened, 20 according to the gender of the parent.<sup>23</sup>

The continued existence of the norm can still be clearly observed today. This norm proclaimed the principle of equality, so that neither side should feel excluded, or that their denomination is suppressed. When the older generation see that a child has been born, they make the young people aware that *this is the church's order*, and the young couple have to accept it. Arbitrarily violating the rule is regarded as *incorrect* behaviour because it upsets the accustomed order and can lead to chaos and arguments.

It is worth stressing that the majority of my informants – not by chance – said that children *inherit* the religion of the parent of the same gender. This statement indicates that denominational ties are not a voluntary choice, they are regarded by the community as a canonised endowment. Children are *born into* a denomination. This norm is also related to the order of inheritance of assets: families still have a well regulated seating order in the churches which means that christening into another denomination could endanger the inheritance and maintenance of seating places. In this way the inheritance of denomination *by gender* is closely linked to the inheritance strategies for assets. If a family *drops out* of a church, it loses its power over the seating places; this is regarded as a loss of social prestige since the place where a family sits in the church is also a sign showing the status it merits as a native within the given community. *Christening outside the accepted order* still causes serious trauma. Anyone who is unable to succeed in having a child of their own gender christened in their own religion is regarded as *weak*. Exceptions to the norm are frequent mainly in villages where the denomination concerned does not have a church, in which case it is regarded as natural that a tiny infant is not taken to a distant village simply to receive the *inherited* religion it has been allocated.

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<sup>21</sup> It was not possible to follow the christening customs in the later Unitarian records because they no longer listed the religion of the parents, only their names.

<sup>22</sup> Sepsiszentgyörgy State Archive, F. 105/60, F. 105/63.

<sup>23</sup> I was unable to analyse the christening data in the Unitarian records for Kökös because the parents' denomination was entered only haphazardly. Sepsiszentgyörgy State Archive, F. 105/233.



Christening the children in one denomination was explained by the desire for common agreement. In a few more patriarchal families the father sometimes insisted that the children follow his religion. Although nowadays village communities for the most part regard the choice of denomination as the internal affair of families in which no one but the family has a say, it is nevertheless a fact that the older people call such men *big-headed*<sup>24</sup>, meaning that even today they do not accept excessive aggressiveness. Christening children to *the same denomination* chosen in advance was a tactic that could be clearly observed among educated village families. In many cases one of the reasons for this was not a well-chosen strategy but the fact that during the communist period teachers did not dare to have their children openly christened, they entrusted this task to the grandparents.<sup>25</sup> It more often happened among younger families that the denomination of the partner with the stronger identity was chosen for children of both genders. The growing number of cases where both children follow the wife's religion can perhaps be regarded as a sign of the female emancipation processes. This kind of christening procedure can be observed today, although still in quite limited circles; it is opposed mainly only in families where the men still strongly defend their prestige as head of the family. One of the reasons given for the spread of this practice is that it is the wife who brings up the children. A couple in Kökös had both their son and daughter christened in the Calvinist church because the husband was rarely at home and he thought it more advisable to entrust the children's religious education to his wife.

The pledge (*reverzális*) demanded in Catholic churches also changed this christening model. In villages with a Unitarian or Calvinist majority, the Protestant partner generally considered that their individual pledge did not endanger the existence of the church.<sup>26</sup>

Demanding the pledge caused internal tensions and conflicts in families with a stronger denominational identity. Families facing such a dilemma elaborated various evasive techniques to carry through their own denominational ideas. The manoeuvres, the search for excuses, finding loopholes in church law indicate that religion has been "privatised". Individuals seeking among the norms try to make them acceptable or to change them. It is precisely such manoeuvres that indicate the existence, reproduction and variation of culture and the fact that these means are being used to shape the revalued rules.

<sup>24</sup> SE, female, b. 1922, Kálnok.

<sup>25</sup> In conversations with intellectuals my informants indicated that village teachers were under stronger control than their urban colleagues. They were sometimes transferred from one village to another because they had attended church, or they were called into the party committee and threatened. They were given compulsory tasks on Sundays that often had an oppressive effect on the families concerned. As a result, substitute strategies were adopted in place of open declaration of religion: the grandparents or relatives were asked to act in place of the parents. As a result in Romania the communist party system was unable to achieve a complete abandonment of the church because village norms did not approve.

<sup>26</sup> RL, female, b. 1955, Gidófalva (now Sepsiköröspatak), Calvinist.

The question of norms and their manipulation is one of the most interesting fields of study in anthropology of law. These studies interpret the life career as being

“no other than the manipulative strategy applied by the members of society against the different, typically contradictory norms. Due to the competence and rationality of the social actors they are aware of the contradictions between the various norms: their freedom of action finds scope in the area of gaps between the different normative systems.”<sup>27</sup>

The norm of the Catholic pledge that was made compulsory in the villages of the Sepsiszek region gave rise to numerous such techniques of evasion and manipulation. It depends on the competence of the individuals placed in a situation of constraint whether they are able to find the gaps in the legislation that will allow them to preserve intact both their own and their spouse's denominational identity. The ways in which the pledge was evaded live on in the oral tradition of the people of Sepsiszek, in this way individuals can select among the available private practices to try to find the method that best suits them.

“Our children's godmother is Unitarian, her husband is Catholic. They promised to have their child christened as Catholic. And they did, in the Catholic church, so that the husband could take communion. And then they took the child to the Unitarian church and had it baptised there. The last christening is the valid one, isn't it? Well, that's how they did it. They didn't violate the pledge, the child was christened as a Catholic. (Chuckles). [...] There were others who gave the pledge, then violated it. They had a daughter and she followed her mother's religion. You could hear of cases like that too. I don't know, if we had had a daughter, if we would have done the same... The woman who was my witness as my wedding gave a pledge too. Her husband was a Catholic from Újfalú, he gave the pledge, the children all became Catholics, and as they grew up and turned 18 they were christened again elsewhere. I think T too became a Unitarian, and so did Cs. Only B remained a Catholic.”

If the Catholic partner does not *observe* their religion very strictly, the commonest practice is to marry only in the Protestant church, that way they avoid the constraint of giving a pledge. Nowadays the practice of evading the pledge norm is still followed only on an individual level. The individual level of evasion has not yet produced new Protestant norms accepted also at the level of the micro-community. Although in the Erdővidék region the Protestant church developed a *Protestant pledge* as a counter-measure, my interlocutors in the Sepsiszek region do not consider this to be a good solution. They believe that introducing

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27 CERUTTI 1995. 154.



such a measure would widen the gap between the denominations, although in other respects they regard it as a natural response.

#### 4) *Death, bell-ringing, funeral*

In most villages of the Sepsiszek region the different denominations have separate cemeteries. Sepsikillyén, for example, one of the very small villages, has Unitarian, Roman Catholic, Calvinist and Orthodox cemeteries. Kökös has separate Orthodox and Calvinist cemeteries, people belonging to other denominations buy grave sites in the “mixed” cemetery. In Kálnok the Calvinist and Unitarian churches also bury their followers in separate places. All three churches in Sepsikőröspatak maintain separate cemeteries. It is rare for a multiconfessional village to have only one cemetery (as is the case in Árkos), here in the past the denominationally strongest families and some of the priests were buried around the church, but more recently all burials are in the single common cemetery.

Village people first obtain basic information on a death from the bell-ringing. The young people no longer know, but their elders always note which bell rings first:

“The bell doesn’t say who died, they know soon enough who has died in the village. [...] For a woman they begin with the little bell, that’s the one they ring first, the second is the big bell, and at the end they ring both bells together. If a man dies, the big bell rings, I know that, the old people (know). But the young ones nowadays don’t.”<sup>28</sup>

The same symbolism was mentioned in Kökös.<sup>29</sup> The local people can decode from the sound of the bell not only whether a woman or a man has died, but among other things also the denomination to which the deceased belonged. As it was recounted in Sepsikőröspatak:

“Another interesting thing here, that is not the custom in all other villages, is that for funerals the bells are rung in all three churches for every Hungarian family – because there are many Gypsies here too. In all three. The ringing is started by the side that has a death, and then the other two churches join in. And the bells toll in all three churches for as long as the funeral lasts.”<sup>30</sup>

In this way villagers in Kőröspatak decode two pieces of information from the sound of the bells. Firstly, whether a Hungarian or a Gypsy has died (because only the deceased’s own church rings for a Gypsy), and secondly the village

28 SE, female, b. 1922, Kálnok, Unitarian.

29 HÜM, female, b. 1946, Kökös, Calvinist.

30 RL, female, b. 1955, Sepsikőröspatak, Calvinist.

community also knows which church the deceased belonged to from the order in which the bells start ringing. In Kökös villagers can tell from the sound of the bell not only the gender of the deceased, but also whether the person was an Orthodox who has moved into the village or a native of Kökös:

“It used to be that they started ringing in the church the deceased had belonged to. They don’t do that any more either. Nowadays, if someone dies in, say Alszege, the nearest church is the Orthodox one. And they begin ringing there. And as they come up towards the cemetery, first the Calvinist church joins in, then the Unitarian. Yes, it depends on where they lived, not so much on the religion. But for Romanians who have moved in from outside, only the Orthodox church rings its bell.”<sup>31</sup>

In Kálnok too “the church the person belonged to begins.”<sup>32</sup> There is a fee for the *bell-ringing*, so in the past in Árkos when the three churches rang their bells it was a sign that the deceased was a *prosperous farmer*,<sup>33</sup> nowadays it indicates denominational distribution within the families:

“It also happens that if there are Unitarians and Catholics in the family, they are sure to have the bell rung in the Catholic church too. For example, just recently, who was it that died? Uncle Sanyi Nagy. He was a Unitarian, and they rang the bell in both churches, in the Catholic too. His daughter-in-law was Catholic, there is a connection that way too.”<sup>34</sup>

Individual decisions are often also reflected in the choice of cemetery. In rare cases denominational identity appeared to be a stronger bond in the life of a family than the marriage ties; in such cases the husband and wife were buried in separate cemeteries. In Kökös marriage partners were buried in different cemeteries generally in cases where the denominational difference also meant an ethnic difference.

“It happened that partners went separately, the old lady was a Calvinist and the old man a big Romanian. So that’s how they were buried, the man is over there in the Orthodox cemetery, and the wife is here in the Calvinist one. But in general couples are buried in the same place.”<sup>35</sup>

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31 HÜM, female, b. 1946, Kökös, Calvinist.

32 SE, female, b. 1922, Kálnok, Unitarian.

33 BZ, male, b. 1952, Árkos, Calvinist.

34 TKE, female, b. 1956, Árkos, Calvinist.

35 HJ, male, b. 1944, Kökös, Roman Catholic.

The strongest factor that can be observed in decisions regarding the choice of burial place is that the wife is placed beside her husband in death too.<sup>36</sup> But the distance between the location of the cemeteries and the mortuary also influenced the decision.

“We live here beside the Orthodox cemetery, why would we go over there to the mixed cemetery?”

– said an Orthodox woman in Kőkös.<sup>37</sup>

## Church attendance

It is still a custom of church attendance today that, if a family are regular churchgoers, the members all go to the church of their own denomination on Sundays. My interlocutors only rarely mentioned people couples going to church together. The most common occasion when they do go together is if their children are to perform in some way, in which case both parents are naturally curious to see their child’s performance.<sup>38</sup>

Interesting church attendance customs often arose around red-letter days; a few families paid special attention to ensuring that no family member felt lonely at such times. That is why they most often went to church together at that time:

“My grandpa was Unitarian – Grandpa K. Grandpa B was Calvinist. Grandma K was Catholic. My uncle, M.K. was the Unitarian cantor. My mother was Catholic. My father was Calvinist. (...) I always remember, what we did (on major feasts) was that everyone went to their own religion on the first day, my mother to the Catholic, my father and I to the Calvinist, and grandpa went to the Unitarian. On the second day we all went together to my father’s church and on the third day everyone went to the Unitarian. In this way we always visited every church on all the major feasts.”<sup>39</sup>

In Kálnok too, the older people mentioned going to church together on red-letter days, according to the same system.<sup>40</sup> In families where the Roman Catholic partner could not take communion because they had refused to give the pledge, they always went to the church of the Protestant partner on major feast days and the Catholic partner took communion in the Protestant church because “there

36 VP, female, b. 1922, Killyén, Unitarian.

37 AFM, female, b. 1955, Kőkös, Orthodox.

38 BBÉ, female, b. 1952, Árkos, Calvinist.

39 BZ, male, Árkos, Calvinist.

40 SE, female, b. 1922, Kálnok, Unitarian.

is only one God”.<sup>41</sup> In mixed Roman Catholic-Protestant marriages, the family went together to the Csíksomlyó pilgrimage feast at Whitsun. Special buses to Somlyó were organised for pilgrims from villages where the number of Catholics had increased, and it often happened that the Protestant partner went with their spouse.<sup>42</sup>

The celebration of church feast days also means collective family visits to church; in these cases the Protestant partner follows the Catholic partner to church indicating their denominational difference only by not making the sign of the cross as the Catholic partner does. The Unitarian gatherings that have recently become popular evoke the atmosphere of Catholic feasts. The Unitarians of the Sepsiszek and Erdővidék regions favour mainly the Vadas<sup>43</sup> Unitarian feast that has been held since the nineties in the vicinity of the villages of Sepsikőröspatak and Középpajta/Aita Medie. The Unitarians go together with their families to these gatherings that have a secular atmosphere.

In addition to red-letter days, prayer weeks are another occasion for collective family attendance. On these occasions all the settlements take care to invite the priests of other denominations. In this way all denominations call on people to attend the prayer weeks, and the priests of different denominations always pay attention to ensuring that two such events are not held at the same time.

## Denominationality in everyday life

The ministers somewhat cynically call the Sepsiszek congregations “feast-day congregations” referring to the fact that nowadays people go to church only on major feast days. Religious life has turned inwards, become internalised and out of sight in the houses. The fact that the churches are still full for major feast days, the communities still maintain their churches, people still have their children christened, and funerals held without a priest are still very rare in the Háromszék region shows that there is still religious life.

As church attendance declines, the demand for home blessings increases. In families where one of the couple is a Catholic, or one of the ancestors was a Catholic, having the home blessed around Epiphany is an important question. In many cases the blessing of the house is the only occasion during the year when the priest and the member of the denomination meet in person. In all villages where there are Catholics among the population, having the house blessed is regarded as the *right thing* to do. The Catholic priests also go into houses to bless them where Catholics once lived but are no longer alive. In Árkos for example, there is a man who no longer has any Catholic living in his house but every year he

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41 HJ, male, Kökös, b. 1944, Roman Catholic.

42 SZI, female, b. 1941, Sepsikőröspatak, Calvinist.

43 Mount Vadas in the vicinity of these villages is the highest peak in the region; since the 1990s the Unitarians have held their main annual assembly here.

has the house blessed. When families knew that the priest was coming to bless the house – they left the gate wide open to signal that they were expecting the priest and they declared their intention to the ministrants who went ahead of the priest. The letters GMB chalked on many doors show that this case is not unique: in denominationally mixed villages even young people who, in spite of their Catholic faith practically never go to church, have their houses blessed. “The priest goes everywhere, even where there are mixed marriages” – said an informant in Kálnok too.<sup>44</sup>

It is not only the GMB sign on the door that shows outsiders the denomination of the people who live in the house, but also the presence of church symbols. Catholics put up sacred images, crosses and rosaries to indicate to outsiders the denominational identity of those who live in the house. Calvinists and Unitarians mainly display the calendars of their denomination to signal their religious allegiance. In some homes the Unitarian and Calvinist, or the Unitarian and Catholic calendars side by side convincingly demonstrate that it is not to show the order of the days that they are placed there.



Roman Catholic and Calvinist use of calendars, Kökös, 2012.

44 DT, female, b. 1941, Kálnok, Unitarian at birth, now Calvinist.

It is mainly women who play the main role in home furnishing and the women in denominationally mixed marriages take special care to ensure that elements of their own identification do not violate the religious identity of their partner. They try to counterbalance the proliferation of sacred images with cards commemorating the Unitarian gatherings, or by displaying confirmation certificates. The house is no longer a place where prayer meetings are held but a functional living space in which symbols of other identities very often appear together with those of denominational identity. The calendar or confirmation certificate placed beside the red, white and green ribbons, the football group photos, or the wedding photos indicate the environment into which denominationality is integrated. The scattered display of symbols is a sign that the inhabitants of the house have “privatised” their faith, regarding it as a natural part of their own lives. It is as much their own as the wedding photo, the memories from childhood or collections of objects that can be regarded as a hobby. But the fact that they make these symbols visible means that people still embrace their religious ties.



The privatisation of denominational symbols. Árkos, 2013.



Religious culture is multi-layered: its presence can also be observed in food customs. In quite a few places the Friday fast is still observed in Catholic-Protestant mixed families.

“I always keep the Friday fast. Sometimes he (the Unitarian husband) does too, but less often. During Lent too he only fasts on Fridays. I eat on Easter Friday too, but only toast, tea, nothing fatty, boiled potatoes, things like that.”<sup>45</sup>

The celebration of Easter is especially interesting in Orthodox–Roman Catholic or Orthodox–Protestant marriages. Given that the “Romanian” and the “Hungarian” Easter rarely fall on the same date because of the use of different calendars, they celebrate both Easters. In Kökös Orthodox-Calvinist families observe a strict fast on Easter Friday, and celebrate both Easters by slaughtering a lamb and baking a milk-loaf.

### Summing up and conclusions

My study perhaps shows that in the Sepsiszkék area of Transylvania religion and denominationality are not merely learnt dogmas, but rather are made up of cultural patterns and attachments that also function in an increasingly secularised world. These patterns are sometimes communal – as in the case of religious rites – and sometimes “privatised”, determining and directing the individual lives of families and micro-communities, life within the family and the home.

Among families of mixed denomination a number of clearly identifiable models or types can be distinguished – depending on the strength of the identity:

*a., Equal rights type* – this type had the most representatives in Sepsiszkék – as the examples cited showed – because the local society, its written and unwritten laws produced and asserted the cultural patterns of this type over the centuries.

*b., Assimilative type* – in this case one of the partners voluntarily renounces their own denominational identity, and the borders of their own denomination entirely disappear for them. This type is found mainly in villages where one denomination is in strong decline and is disappearing while the other congregation is growing stronger.

*c., Patriarchal type* – this is intertwined to a certain extent with the assimilative type. The father decides all directions of denominationality, generally imposing the dominance of his own denomination.

*d., Catholic type* – the directions of denominationality are not determined within the family as an internal affair of the family concerned, but under external influence, following the considerations of Catholic church policy.

45 SE, female, Sepsikillyén, b. 1939, Roman Catholic.

Most of the patterns of coexistence operating in the multiconfessional environment have centuries-old roots and can be traced back to unwritten laws. Individuals learnt the norms of denominational coexistence from early childhood. They learnt where marriages were to be held, in which religion children were to be christened, what bells were to be rung and how to mourn relatives, and how to strengthen their own denominational identity with the help of symbols. According to the old community belief, the denomination is *inherited*, just like assets, the name or ethnic identity. At the same time a certain hierarchy of identities arose within the cultural system: the national identity was always more important and of a higher order than the denominational identity.

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## THE SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT IN ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN THE SZÉKELYFÖLD REGION

**Abstract:** In the light of the Marian apparitions in the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, people today are in a crisis situation characterised by alienation from the church and the faith, selfishness, the proliferation of sin, from which the way out would be atonement, accepting a sacrifice of atonement. From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century a growing number of private revelations in Hungary and Transylvania face us with the same phenomenon and solution to the problem. The study presents a few atonement practices that have appeared in the last thirty years in Roman Catholic religious practice in the Székelyföld region.

**Keywords:** atonement, sacrifice, prayer, pilgrimage, penance, Székelyföld

The study presents some of the findings of a lengthy fieldwork begun in 1994 and still ongoing, with occasional interruptions. The presence of the atonement movement in the Székelyföld region first came to my attention in Csíkszentdomokos, where in 1994 I encountered a number of different atonement devotions (in church, in private homes – in a number of communities, carrying around in procession a Charbel prayer-house, a statue of the Pilgrim Madonna)<sup>1</sup>. When I discovered that this was not a local characteristic, I extended my research to other settlements of the area, in the Csík Basin (Csíkszereda, Csíkszentkirály, Csíktaploca).<sup>2</sup> From 1999 I have tried to find out about the atonement practice in Szőkefalva,<sup>3</sup> Korond, Szováta

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: elfabgab@freemail.hu

1 See: FÁBIÁN 1996; 1999.

2 For interim reports on findings, see FÁBIÁN 2006.

3 I have been doing fieldwork here since 17 June 1999. The still ongoing research work was more intensive between 1999-2005; during that time I regularly took part in the public appearances in Szőkefalva and in the night-time atonements. On a number of occasions I travelled to the location in the company of pilgrims. After the end of the public appearances each year, I closely observed 1-2 events, generally the pilgrimage feast on the anniversary of 17<sup>th</sup> June and the May atonement. I conducted interviews with the seer, her family members, the local clergy, and with pilgrims visiting the shrine. For a report on the results, see: FÁBIÁN 2000.

and along the Felső-Nyárád (Nyárádremete, Nyárádköszvényes)<sup>4</sup>, then from 2010 in the whole of the Székelyföld<sup>5</sup> region.

Atonement is forgiveness of sins sought with sacrifice and prayer. The atonement sacrifice is an action that wipes out the sin and restores the relationship between God and man. In the Old Testament it is only animal sacrifice made for sins, and in the New Testament Christ's death on the cross that is given that interpretation.<sup>6</sup> According to the teaching of the Catholic Church Jesus' sacrifice of his life is the most perfect atonement sacrifice that resulted in reconciling the relationship of love between God and man, that Adam and Eve had broken with sin. In addition, individuals must themselves strive to experience the atonement sacrifice that they can offer as redemption for their own sins and those of others.<sup>7</sup> However, this is not a central article of faith of the Catholic Church, its necessity has been judged differently over the course of history, thus its justification was emphasised only by a narrow circle, although we find among them high church dignitaries, such as Pope Pius XII, or Pope John Paul II.<sup>8</sup> The practice of penance and the veneration of the Sacred Heart placed special stress on it.<sup>9</sup> From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century atonement appears as an expected task in the messages of the Marian apparitions, but we find its first explicit statement in the messages of Fatima. Mary most often asks for atonement brought with sacrifice, renunciation and prayer for accumulated sins, and warns of their consequences.<sup>10</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, besides the Marian apparitions, we find a growing number of individual vision experiences that emphasise the same things. In a number of cases it is stated that performing this mission is the special task of Hungary, as the country of Mary.<sup>11</sup>

## 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century atonement movements in Hungary

In Hungary over the last thirty or so years a colourful atonement prayer practice has emerged, comprising various devotions, either differing or in many respects similar, supplementing each other and intertwining. Their establishment was urged by private revelations in various parts of the world – but particularly in Hungary – supernatural messages that, like the popular/world famous apparitions of Mary in the last century and a half (Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje)

4 For a report on the results, see: FÁBIÁN 2011.

5 In 2010 I conducted a survey by questionnaire in 58 settlements of the Székelyföld region to examine the presence of atonement. The research was based on a census conducted in 1998 regarding atonement places in the Gyulafehérvár Archdiocese. I carried out research on the spot in fifteen of the settlements examined, and collected information on the other settlements through telephone conversations with local church leaders and individuals active in the organisation of religious life. On the results, see: FÁBIÁN 2012. The research currently being carried out is based on the results of that investigation.

6 MAGYAR KATOLIKUS LEXIKON <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/E/engesztel%C5%91%20%C3%A1ldozat.html> Accessed on 13 August 2015.

7 Cf.: SZEDERKÉNYI s. d.

8 Cf.: SZEGEDI s. d.

9 ERDŐ 2012.

10 Cf.: BARNÁ 2000. 50–53; LENGYEL 2007. 275; ANTALÓCZI 1991. 36–42.

11 See: LENGYEL 2006. 111–119.

emphasise conversion and atonement.<sup>12</sup> A common feature of the atonement prayer practices linked to the movements of seers of various origin, many of them from Hungary, is that they are performed for redemption of the sins of mankind, and according to a specified schedule, at a particular time of day, or day of the week or month. In the atonement devotional practice in Hungary in the 1990s the influences that can be felt most strongly are three Hungarian women – Mária Natália Kovacsics a nun, Erzsébet Szántó Mrs Károly Kindelmann and Mária Rogács Mrs Zoltán Takács – an Australian, Little Pebble and an Italian seer, Pierina Gilli.<sup>13</sup>

Mária Natália Kovacsics<sup>14</sup> (1901-1992), a nun, had vision experiences from childhood. In private revelations Jesus drew attention to the excessive sin and offered atonement as a means of redemption, designating it the privileged task of the Hungarian people. In the interest of achieving world peace, she urged the spread of veneration of the *Victorious Queen of the World*, as well as the establishment of an atonement order and an atonement chapel. Her notes in the form of a diary<sup>15</sup> were published in several languages. In the early 1940s she had to inform her church superiors about the supernatural messages. Cardinal József Mindszenty recognised the need for and importance of atonement, in a number of circular letters he encouraged the faithful to follow these devotions.<sup>16</sup> The Christmas 1946 circular letter of the Hungarian Catholic Board of Bishops is also proof of a stand for the movement.<sup>17</sup> Despite this, it is only after the 1980s that the spread of the devotions can be observed in Hungary, but at that time it no longer received the earlier support. In the past ten years, it can be felt that greater value is again placed on the movement within the Church. Since 2012 the Queen of the World Atonement Movement has undertaken to cultivate and continue the spiritual legacy of Sister Natália.<sup>18</sup>

Erzsébet Szántó Mrs Károly Kindelmann (1913-1985) launched the *Flame of Love* movement.<sup>19</sup> From 13 April 1962 right up to her death she received private revelations from Jesus and Mary that she published in the “Diary of the Flame of

12 Cf.: BARNA 2000. 48-49.

13 On the spread in Hungary (Palócföld region) of the devotions they urged, see: LENGYEL 2006. 111-117; LENGYEL 2007. 274-281.

14 On her biography and the atonement movement she launched, see: FOGAS 1993, 1994, 2001; <http://www.vilagkiralynoje.hu/>; <http://www.natalia-nover.lapok.eu/>; ANTALÓCZI 1991. 134-135; LENGYEL 2006. 113-114; LENGYEL 2007. 276-277.

15 The extent to which the notes written subsequently at the order of a priest can be regarded as a spiritual diary is disputed. The authenticity of the first Hungarian-language edition of the private revelations (*Regina [...] s. d.*), produced without the knowledge of Sister Natália and not based on the original notes in Hungarian (it was translated into Hungarian from a German-language publication), is also questioned. Cf.: FOGAS 1993. 11-13. This version is most often popularised as a diary, with the difference that the mistakenly translated title (Victorious Queen of the World) appears correctly, the word “győzelmes” is used in the place of “győzedelmes”. See: [http://www.vilagkiralynoje.hu/ma\\_files/natalia\\_nover.pdf](http://www.vilagkiralynoje.hu/ma_files/natalia_nover.pdf); <http://www.egipatrona.hu/kapolna/index.php/natalia-nover/natalia-nover-naploja-vilag-gyozelmes-kiralynoje#.VjCcdLhDIX> Accessed on 05 May 2015.

16 See: ERDŐ 2012.

17 For the text of the circular letter, see: [http://www.vilagkiralynoje.hu/ma\\_files/a\\_magyar\\_katolikus\\_puspoki\\_kar\\_1946\\_os\\_karacsonyi\\_korlevele.pdf](http://www.vilagkiralynoje.hu/ma_files/a_magyar_katolikus_puspoki_kar_1946_os_karacsonyi_korlevele.pdf) Accessed on 05. May 2015.

18 [http://www.vilagkiralynoje.hu/vilag\\_kiralynoje\\_engesztelo\\_mozgalom/](http://www.vilagkiralynoje.hu/vilag_kiralynoje_engesztelo_mozgalom/) Accessed on 05 May 2015.

19 On the movement, see: ANTALÓCZI 1991.85-98; BEGYIK s.d.a; s.d.b; <http://www.szeretetlang.hu/> On the spread of the movement in Hungary, see: LENGYEL 2006. 112-113; LENGYEL 2007. 277-278.

Love”<sup>20</sup>. The ever wider spread of sin is emphasised through her too, the way out would be atonements in the spirit of the “Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary”. In her case too, the atonement mission of the Hungarian people is emphasised. The movement launched in the 1960s at first found followers mainly abroad, the earliest church recognition was not in Hungary either but in 1988 in a diocese in Ecuador.<sup>21</sup> It spread more widely in Hungary in the 1980s and won church approval in Hungary in 2009. The spirituality is supported by the international church private society, a legal entity called the Flame of Love Movement of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.<sup>22</sup>

Mária Rogács Mrs Zoltán Takács (1956 -), a woman from Sükösd, has seen apparitions of Jesus since 1993.<sup>23</sup> Since 1994 on the first Friday of every month and on every Friday during Lent she experiences the sufferings and death of Jesus on Golgotha with increasingly intense pain. She has undertaken these atonement sacrifices, at first for the youth of the world, then for the priests of the world, and since 1999 for the salvation of the whole world. She sees the dead, has healing powers and the gift of speaking in tongues. Between 1996 and 2014 the supernatural messages and teachings transmitted through her were published in *Golgota*, a monthly paper she edited, and then on their own website.<sup>24</sup> At the request of Jesus they also hold regular weekly<sup>25</sup> and monthly<sup>26</sup> atonements offered for youth, for priests and for the sick.<sup>27</sup> The special task for the Hungarian people of atonement also appears in the messages and teachings transmitted to her, also expressed in the use and gift of a special five-coloured rosary.<sup>28</sup> Recognition of her activity extends mainly to the “Community of Love” circles supporting her.<sup>29</sup> The Catholic Church receives her activity for the most

20 The diary has been published in several Hungarian and foreign-language editions around the world. After the recognition of the movement in Hungary (2009) the Szent István Társulat also issued a critical edition. KINDELMANN 2010. This publication is also available in electronic form on the website of the Flame of Love movement. <http://www.szeretetlang.hu/?old=leiras&parent=4> Accessed on 05 May 2015.

21 BEGYIK s. d. 5-6.

22 The movement also has its own website: <http://www.szeretetlang.hu/> Accessed on 12 August 2015.

23 Nowadays the Sükösd phenomena can be followed on the internet, on the website of the Sükösd Community of Love organised around the seer: <http://www.sukosdiszerettkozosseg.hu/> The site also lists devotional literature on this topic published in the last twenty years: <http://www.sukosdiszerettkozosseg.hu/kiadvanyaink/> Accessed on 10. July 2015. Social scientists have also carried out fieldwork at the site; see: PUSZTAI 1999; ARNOLD 2005.

24 <http://www.sukosdiszerettkozosseg.hu/jezus-krisztus-urunk-tanitasai/> Accessed on 10 June 2015.

25 At first atonement devotions were performed three times a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; since Lent 2013 they have not been held on Fridays. <http://www.sukosdiszerettkozosseg.hu> Accessed on 12. June 2015.

26 On the 13<sup>th</sup> of every month they hold atonement in memory of the Fatima apparitions. <http://www.sukosdiszerettkozosseg.hu> Accessed on 12 June 2015.

27 For a summary, see: <http://www.sukosdiszerettkozosseg.hu/a-sukosdi-jelenseg/a-magankinyilatkoztatask-szereperol/> Accessed on 12 June 2015; ARNOLD 2005. 35-44.

28 The prayer aid, identical to the missionary rosary, is coloured yellow, blue, white, red and green to symbolise the continents as well as the territories annexed from Hungary. Its use helps to carry out Hungary’s privileged task, to atone for the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, and for the whole world. Cf.: ARNOLD 2005. 41-43; LENGYEL 2006. 114-115.

29 On the judgement of the seers and their followers, see: ARNOLD 2005. 50-51.

part with reservations, some members of the hierarchy have brought measures forbidding it (László Huszár, Bishop of Nagybecskerek diocese, László Dankó and his successor Balázs Bábel of Kalocsakecskemét diocese, János Pénzes of Szabadka).<sup>30</sup>

William Kamm (1950-), the Australian seer known as *Little Pebble*, has been receiving private revelations from Jesus and Mary from the age of eighteen.<sup>31</sup> He has been publishing them since 1983. He regards his most important mission as being to assist preparations for Christ's second coming. Since 1983 he has also had an individual charism, that he must use to create a unity of the Seers<sup>32</sup>. To this end he has contacted numerous seers around the world, including several in Hungary.<sup>33</sup> He has already achieved the "unity" with some, because he also receives messages through them from Jesus and Mary, that is one of the proofs of the justification of his task. On 13 July 1985, Mary asked him for prayer, penance and atonement for world peace and entrusted him with establishing Saint Charbel prayer houses (*Saint Charbel Prayer, Peace, Unity and Atonement Houses*).<sup>34</sup> They were given wider media coverage<sup>35</sup> after the seer's scandalous life, the condemnation of his activities<sup>36</sup>, church declarations dissociating themselves,<sup>37</sup> and his imprisonment<sup>38</sup>. He still carries out his activity that can be followed on his website.<sup>39</sup>

According to the present state of our knowledge, there was a big wave of establishments of Charbel prayer houses in Hungary from the early 1990s<sup>40</sup>, the information needed for setting up a prayer house was disseminated in a stencilled publication.<sup>41</sup>

30 On the measures, see: <http://www.hagiosz.net/?q=kvazilatnokno>; <http://www.hagiosz.net/?q=sukosdilato masok> Accessed on 05 June 2015.

31 I have summed up the seer's biography and activity from the information on his official website: <http://littlepebble.org/> Accessed on 13 August 2015.

32 See: <http://littlepebble.org/2015/01/28/unity-of-the-seers-charism-of-the-little-pebble/> Accessed on 13 August 2015.

33 See: <http://littlepebble.org/2015/05/13/hungary-unity-of-the-seers/> Accessed on 13 August 2015. Among the seers in Hungary listed on the website, Ágnes MENKÓ is probably the same person referred to by Ágnes LENGYEL in her study, who mediates the revelations of the Flame of Love since the death of Erzsébet SZÁNTÓ Mrs Károly KINDELMANN. Cf: LENGYEL 2007. 278.

34 Programme of the Saint Charbel – House of – Prayer – Peace – Unity and Atonement *Szent... s. d.* 15-17.

35 Information can be found on the internet regarding the propaganda intended to discredit him. The journalist Graeme Webber devoted a book to the subject in 2008, see: <http://www.awolfamongthesheep.com.au/> Accessed on 13 August 2015.

36 It can be mentioned as an example that there were negative opinions emphasising the sectarian nature of the Saint Charbel order he established, the apocalyptic tone of the seer's prophecies and his proclamation of himself as the future and last pope.

37 The Maronite and the Roman Catholic churches took measures of this kind. He was also expelled from his own church.

38 <http://littlepebble.org/messages/> Accessed on 13 August 2015. The messages he conveyed can also be read on Hungarian internet forums. <http://www.azidokvege.hupont.hu/46/little-pebble-altal-kapott-uzenetek/> Accessed on 13 August 2015.

39 <http://littlepebble.org/> Accessed on 13 August 2015.

40 For examples from the Palócföld region, see: LENGYEL 2007. 278-281.

41 The prayer booklet cited in footnote 26 was on sale in the 1990s in the devotional articles shop of the St Michael Archangel parish church of Érd – Óváros; it was probably also published there. I have no information on whether it was distributed anywhere else. The close connection between the Hungarian seer mentioned in footnote 23 and Little Pebble probably also played an important part in the production of this publication, since it also included a message from Mary that Ágnes received on 3 November 1989 through the Australian seer. *Szent... s. d.* 13-14.





SZENT CHARBEL IMA-BÉKE-EGYSÉG-  
és KIENGESZTELŐDÉS H Á Z A .

BÁRKA SZENT SZÜZE, MÁRIA ANYÁNK  
KERESZTÉNYEK SEGÍTSÉGE.

I M A - P R O G R A M

I. RÉSZ

/ A Szűzanya által 1985.VII. 13-án adott 33.sz. Üzenet alapján./

- Előkészület az imahelyen /1.oldalon/  
19.45 órákor /minden hónap első szombatján/ : Tömjénezés az imahelyen és az egész lakásban, majd szenteltvíz hintése.  
Ezután elmondjuk a teljes Exorcizmust Szt.Mihályhoz.  
20.00 órákor /név szerint köszöntve a jelenlévő Egieket/ elkezdjük  
1. a Rózsafüzér-imádságot: 15 tizedet,  
1/1. az örvendetes-rózsafüzért felajánljuk a Szentatyáért,  
a világ összes biborosáért, püspökéért és papjaiért.  
1/2. a fájdalmas-rózsafüzért a jelenlévők kéréseiért mondjuk.  
1/3. a dicsőséges-rózsafüzért hálaadásul ajánljuk fel.  
2. 15 percig a Szentírásból olvasunk, felajánlva a tisztító-tűzben szenvedő lelkekért.  
3. Pár percig Jézus, Mária és a különböző Szentek által kapott Üzenetekből olvasunk, előkészülve ezzel az Úr Jézusnak hamarosan bekövetkező, hatalommal és dicsőségben történő második eljövételére.  
4. Mondjuk el a "Rózsafüzér-Keresztútát" a Tisztító-tűzben szenvedő lelkekért.  
5. A Loretoi-litánia elmondása következik.  
6. Litánia Szent Józsefhez.  
7. Litánia az "Órangyalhoz".  
8. Litánia Szent Charbel-hez. /ejtsd: Sarbel /  
Az időközben kért további imák elmondása:  
9. Irgalmas rózsafüzér /198.sz. Üzenet alapján/ elmondása a szenvedő Egyházért, hogy küzdelme győzelmes és dicsőséges legyen.  
10. Szeretetláng rózsafüzér /261. és 270.sz. Üzenet alapján/  
11. Szent Sebek rózsafüzér / " " " " /  
12. Meg nem születettek  
13. Szeretetláng litánia  
Befejező ének /pl. Salve Regina stb./

/Azt a füzetet, amelybe kéréseinket regisztráljuk az imaösszejövetelek alkalmával, a Szent Szűz /pl. Rosa Mystica/ képe elé helyezzük./

Cover of the Saint Charbel House of Prayer – Peace – Unity and Atonement prayer booklet, with the prayer order communicated in a private revelation at the first Saturday gathering.

Right from the time they first began to spread we also find propaganda against them in church publications.<sup>42</sup>

The Italian seer Pierina Gilli<sup>43</sup> (1911-1991) urged veneration of the *Rosa Mystica*. In 1947 she had a revelation from the Virgin Mother as the Mystical Rose. She wore a white cloak decorated with three roses and asked for prayer (white rose), penance (yellow rose) and atonement (red rose). From 1974 when it was carved as a statue based on the vision, copies for use in processions have been made. The so-called *Pilgrim Madonna* statues are intended to transmit Mary's requests (prayer, penance, atonement), and like the Fatima pilgrim statue, to spread the blessings of the shrine. Numbered portrayals blessed at the shrine have spread around the world; we have data on their presence in Hungary from the 1980s.<sup>44</sup>

At first the devotions that spread under the influence of these atonement movements were able to take root mainly in paraliturgy, but even at the beginning they had church representatives and places of transmission, such as Budapest<sup>45</sup>, Érd<sup>46</sup>, or Homokkomárom<sup>47</sup>.

The atonement practice in Hungary has become considerably more varied and widespread. The numbers urging and following it have increased, as has the number of transmission places. Some branches of the movements with roots in Hungary (Victorious Queen of the World and Flame of Love cult) are receiving growing support from the Hungarian Catholic Church. In 2006 the Conference of Hungarian Catholic Bishops proclaimed a year of atonement prayer for the revival of the Hungarian nation.<sup>48</sup> The Hungarian church dioceses operating in the territory of historical Hungary, including the Gyulafehérvár Archdiocese also joined the initiative.<sup>49</sup>

The atoners' joint internet forum, *Engesztelők lapja*<sup>50</sup> can help to learn about the present atonement practice; it provides detailed and up-to-date information on the atonement movements within the Hungarian-speaking territories, mainly those

42 Cf.: SIPOS 2015.

43 On her visions and the movement she launched, see: ANTALÓCZI 1991. 99-102; WEIGL 1992. On the spread of the Pilgrim Madonna cult in Hungary, see: LENGYEL 2007. 278-279.

44 According to the information available to date, one of the earliest placings in a church was in the Holy Family church in Budapest in 1985, where the practice of praying for the Hungarian people on the 13<sup>th</sup> of each month has continued from that year right up to the present. Cf.: <http://www.szentsalad.hu/?show=4> Accessed on 20 August 2015.

45 One such place in Budapest was the Kút völgy chapel in Buda, where atonements for Hungarians began in 1969 under the leadership of the local parish priest István REGŐCZI. For more detail on the history of the chapel, see: REGŐCZI 1996. 19-26.

46 The parish church of Saint Michael Archangel in Érd - Óváros became a bigger centre of attraction in the early 1990s where atonement devotions were held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of every month while József Izeli was the parish priest. I have no information on the period following his retirement (in 2007).

47 From 1988 the place of pilgrimage that has roots reaching back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century became one of the major atonement centres in Transdanubia. Since then the practice of atonement on the 13<sup>th</sup> of each month is still observed there. On the revival of the shrine, see: SÁNDOR 1999.

48 A special commemorative album was devoted to events of the prayer year. SÜLLEI et al. 2007.

49 Süllei et al. 2007. 21.

50 <http://www.engesztelok.hu/> Accessed on 03 September 2015.



with Hungarian roots, the concept of atonement, its theological interpretation, and Hungary's atonement vocation. Browsing the site one is struck by the rapid increase in visions urging atonement, and the whole series of new tools offered to counterbalance the proliferation of sins, such as the atoners' way of the cross<sup>51</sup>, the united Flame of Love of the Holy Spirit and Mary<sup>52</sup>, etc. This phenomenon is also illustrated by a publication issued in 2014 by the Stella Maris Foundation<sup>53</sup>. It contains more than 50 rosary prayers (57 in all) "dictated by heaven" in the last 10-15 years alone. The increasing support and popularisation of the activity of seers in Hungary mentioned above, the greatly increased emphasis placed on Hungary's atonement task, as well as the Hungarian atonement tradition reaching back to Saint Stephen or even further can be mentioned as an explanation of the manifestation also recognised in the literature on the analysis of visions.<sup>54</sup>

## 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> century atonement movements in Transylvania (Székelyföld region)

From the late 1980s under the influence of the private revelations presented above, various atonement prayer communities organised from grass roots level and atonement places with larger catchment areas were established also in Transylvania, in the Székelyföld region, at first following initiatives from Hungary, then at their own initiative. The earliest to spread was the Thursday prayer practice<sup>55</sup> linked to the private revelations of Erzsébet Szántó Mrs Károly Kindelmann, generally in private houses, as devotions performed within the frame of the rosary confraternity.

The earliest atonement prayer practice linked to a church arose in Csíktaploca. Atonement devotions began in 1987 in the parish church of the settlement that belongs to the Csíkszereda administrative area, at first on Thursdays, then from September 1988 on the 12<sup>th</sup> of each month, where sacred hours covering the whole night became part of the local liturgy since they also comprised adoration and holy mass. The political change in 1989 brought possibilities for the wider spread of the atonement movement. The devotions that had earlier been restricted mainly to private homes, now found a place also within the church religious practice. A survey carried out in 1998<sup>56</sup> found the presence of some form of atonement devotions in 58 (40%) of the 144<sup>57</sup> settlements in the Székelyföld region. 80% of

51 <http://engesztelok.hu/irasok-tanulmanyok/879-az-engesztelok-keresztutja> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

52 <http://engesztelok.hu/magyarorszag-engesztelo-hivatas/155-a-szentlelek-es-maria-egyesített-szeretelangja> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

53 JÁNOSSY 2014.

54 See: BARNÁ 2000. 47; KESZEG – PETI – PÓCS 2009. 8.

55 For further details, see: FÁBIÁN 2011.

56 For further details, see: FÁBIÁN 2012.

57 The Gyulafehérvár Archdiocese operates parishes in the settlements studied in the Székelyföld region.



Thursday atonement prayer hour held in a private house, around a table decorated like an altar. Korond/Corund, 2002. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN



Thursday atonement prayer hour held in a private house, with the prayer gestures widely used in the charismatic movement. Korond/Corund, 2002. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN

the atonement devotions took place in an ecclesiastical (church, chapel, religious instruction room, prayer room) environment, the rest were held in private homes. But whatever the place, at that time the majority were still paraliturgical occasions. The results of a survey repeated 12 years later show that in 2010 atonement prayers were still said in 79% of the earlier places and new ones had appeared, as a result the spread value of 1998 had fallen by only 2%. A greater change could be observed in their acceptance by the church: in many places they had become part of the liturgy. At the time of both surveys there were settlements, mainly towns, where atonement devotions were held in several places, generally at different times.

A sociology of religion survey<sup>58</sup> conducted in 2010 helps to give an insight into the extent to which a representative stratum of Roman Catholics in the Székelyföld region with a Roman Catholic majority (84%), specifically in the Csík region<sup>59</sup> had joined one or other of the atonement movements. The results show that the respondents tended to be members of two prayer communities, the rosary confraternity (29%) and the atonement prayer group (9.8%),<sup>60</sup> while the participation in certain “modern” spirituality movements<sup>61</sup> remained below 6%.<sup>62</sup>

The investigations to date reveal little of the prayer practices followed by the atonement communities, or of their prayer repertoire. In the late 1980s the various devotions circulated mainly in manuscript form. A “blue atonement booklet” titled *Engesztelő imaóra* [Atonement Prayer Hour] appeared in 1990, was reissued a number of times, and was widely used.

Following the change of political system, there was a sudden great increase in the offer, providing a rich literature from which to compile the atonement repertoires.

The free practice of religion resulting from the 1989 political change also opened up possibilities for pilgrimages abroad. Among the sites of Marian apparitions, the greatest number visited the Medjugorje shrine, but some went as far as Lourdes and Fatima.

Érd, Homokkomárom and Budapest were foremost among the atonement places in Hungary in the early 1990s, while in the second half of the 1990s Sükösd was the most visited.

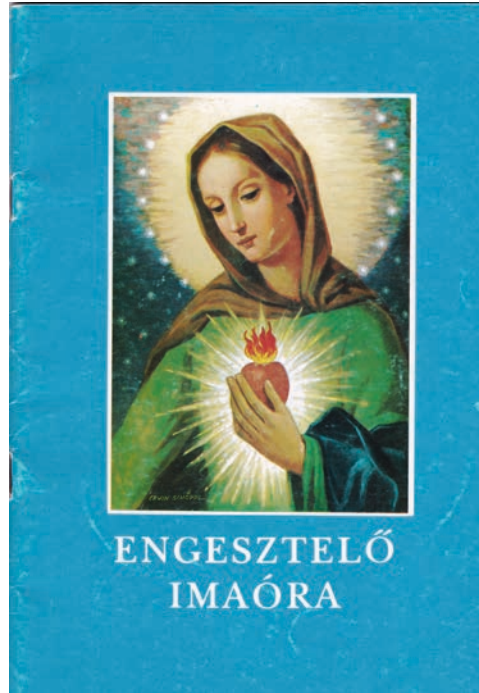
58 The survey by questionnaire of 613 persons examined the religiosity of the Roman Catholic population of 61 settlements in the Székelyföld region. Cf.: FEJES 2014. 4-6; 98-100; 148-151.

59 The Gyulafehérvár Archdiocese classified here the archdeaconate districts of Alcsík and Felcsík.

60 The researcher regards both groups as traditional (as also existing before the political changes of 1989). In addition, the church council, church choir, youth group, women’s association, the group of church cleaners/decorators/repairers were also included in this category. Although atonement prayer groups had also been formed before the change of system, in my opinion in 1989 this religious community could not yet be regarded as traditional.

61 The religious movements launched or revived after the change of system were classified in this group: Cursillo, Scouts, University spirituality, Men’s Association, Fokolaré, Net, Married Couples’ Weekend Movement, Faith and Light, KALOT, Charismatic prayer group, Kolping, Taizé.

62 They participated to a greater extent only in the activity of two of the new religious communities (Scouts - 6%, University spirituality – 2.8%), the rate of participation in the others remained below 1.5%.



Cover of the Atonement Prayer Hour prayer  
booklet, with an image of Mary  
linked to the Flame of Love spirituality

In the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century two shrines attracting visitors from a wider area emerged in Transylvania, one of which was also a place of atonement and became more popular than those in Hungary. From 2000 Szőkefalva and from 2005 Szilágynagyfalu became the most visited atonement shrines of the Szeklers. The Csíktaploca atonement gradually lost its earlier significance and the practice that was followed continuously for 25 years was no longer observed here from July 2012. Nowadays the earlier popular pilgrimages also attract fewer people; since 2008 the introduction of a new prayer greeting Mary on the first Saturday, in addition to the major church year and feast days (Whitsun, the feast on Mary's name day) draws large numbers of pilgrims, especially from the Székelyföld region to the Csíksomlyó votive church.

A few figures from the records kept by a pilgrim from Csík will perhaps give an idea of the popularity of the places of pilgrimage: since 1985<sup>63</sup> she has taken part in 213 pilgrimages, close to 80% of which she helped to organise. She visited Erd 8 times between 1990-1992, Sükösd 21 times between 1995-2004<sup>64</sup>, Szőkefalva

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63 Before the political changes of 1989, between 1985-1990 she organised pilgrimages by friends and relatives to Máriaradna (on eight occasions) to the "feast day of Hungarians" on 8 September.

64 During this period there was a year when pilgrimages here were organised on three occasions.





Atonement held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of each month in the Saint Michael Archangel parish church in Érd-Óváros, the altar with statues of Mary carried by the pilgrims.  
Érd, 1995. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN

86 times since 21 March 1999<sup>65</sup>, Szilágynagyfalu 51 times since 13 August 2004<sup>66</sup>, Medjugorje 14 times since 20 October 2007<sup>67</sup>, Lourdes three times between 2005-2011 and Fatima on two occasions, in 2005 and 2011.

Atonements are held in Szőkefalva on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of every month since December 1999 following the visions of Rozália Marian (1964-2011).<sup>68</sup> Mary first appeared on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1995 to the woman who lost her sight at the age of 30. From autumn 1998 the private “conversations” became public and remained so until their con-

65 They first learnt about the apparitions in Szőkefalva on the occasion of a pilgrimage to Sükösd. From the second occasion on, she organised pilgrimages to every public appearance in Szőkefalva (22 occasions). During this time (1999-2005) the number of pilgrims organised for the trips ranged from 50 to 800. There was also a demand for visits to the atonements held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of the month, but these involved smaller numbers (less than 50 participants). In recent years she has generally only been able to organise pilgrimages for the anniversary of the appearances.

66 They generally come here on 4-5 occasions a year, for the atonements on the first Saturday.

67 Pilgrimages have been organised here from rural areas since the early 1990s through the intermediary of Hungary. From 1992 a family business here has been organising pilgrimages. They organise trips mainly to Érd and Medjugorje.

68 In 2005 a special research group was formed to study the Szőkefalva apparitions and phenomena. Cf.: Pócs 2012. 7-8. A number of studies have been published on their results, see, for example: Gyórfy 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Peti 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, 2012a, 2012b; Pócs 2008a, 2008b, 2008c. On the Szőkefalva atonement devotions, see: Gyórfy 2012. 149-151.



"Greeting Mary" on the first Saturday in the Csíksomlyó/Şumuleu Ciuc votive church.  
Csíksomlyó/ Şumuleu Ciuc, 2010. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN

clusion on 17 June 2005 when Mary made a declaration as the Queen of Light. On the occasion of her second and third appearances Mary initiated the creation of prayer groups, and the establishment of a "prayer centre". To meet the requests in practice an atonement community was formed of two different denominations (Roman Catholic, Orthodox), and ethnic groups (Romanian, Hungarian), and night-time atonements on the 17<sup>th</sup> of each month were introduced from December 1999. In my opinion the ideas for the practical implementation were influenced not only by the local parish priest and his faithful<sup>69</sup> but also by pilgrims from the Székelyföld region who were in close contact with the seer from the time of the second apparition. A number of them were committed practitioners and disseminators of atonement and they also had experience in launching the devotion practice. In response to a request received in a later message, the devotions on May 17<sup>th</sup> were proclaimed the day of youth atonement.

A publication<sup>70</sup> containing the material of the atonements in Szőkefalva between 1999-2011 was also compiled, and published in memory of the seer after her death, and was intended to help the atonement devotions performed in the spirit of the Queen of Light. Separate atonement communities were also formed

<sup>69</sup> Cf.: GYÖRFY 2012. 150.

<sup>70</sup> JÁNOSSY 2011.

in a few settlements of the Székelyföld region (e.g. Nyárádremete, Szárhegy, the Gyimes villages) to cultivate veneration of the Queen of Light.

In Nagyfalu atonement devotions have been held since October 2004 following the visions of Éva Bara Madarász<sup>71</sup> (1942-2010). Its initiator was given the task in 1987 in Csíksomlyó from the Holy Spirit to work in the spirit of ecumenism, together with her spiritual guide, János Csilik. She was active between 1999-2004 in Érsemjén, where she was co-leader of the local atonement community. In 2002 she moved to Szilágynagyfalu, where from 2004 to 2008 she received supernatural messages from the Holy Spirit. Since 2008, because of the state of her health, her spiritual leader receives the messages and teachings. She died in July 2010. On the basis of her visions, at present atonement devotions are held on the first Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday of every month, and regularly on Thursdays and Sundays, performed according to the instructions received in the supernatural messages. The prayer practice has also been published in printed form.<sup>72</sup> The devotions are performed not only there but also in a number of atonement communities in the Székelyföld region.

## **The atonement sacrifice in the Székelyföld region**

Special emphasis is placed on atonement practice nowadays on the notion that there is no atonement without sacrifice. Atonement is made at the invitation of Jesus, but it means voluntarily undertaking a sacrifice. Atonement can be achieved by practising various atonement actions. Without covering all aspects, I shall deal with two of these<sup>73</sup>:

1. prayer
2. penance

## **The atonement prayer as atonement sacrifice**

Regarding their organisation in time, the atonement devotions are linked to a particular time of day, or a particular day of the week or month; their duration varies. The daily and weekly devotions are shorter, lasting one to three hours. The atonements held regularly every month are longer and are organised not only during the day but also at night. On the basis of the surveys described above, it can be said that atonement devotions in the Székelyföld region in private homes are held

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<sup>71</sup> The seer published her autobiography in three volumes. BARA MADARÁSZ 2003; 2006; 2008.

<sup>72</sup> CSILIK – B. MADARÁSZ 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Cf.: MAGYAR – HORVÁTH 2006. 76-81.





Prayer hour for a children's group on the May youth atonement day.  
Szőkefalva/Seuca, 2002. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN



Atonement devotions performed regularly every week in a private house under the influence of the phenomena in Szilágynagyfalu/Nuşfalău. Csíkmenaság/Armăşeni, 2011. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN



mainly on Thursdays, while those in churches tend to be on the first Thursday, the first Friday or the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the month.<sup>74</sup>

Fewer examples are found of commitment to daily prayer practice. The view that the extent of sacrifice depends on the duration of the devotions and the time when they are performed (day, night) can also be found among the atoners. The vigil is a very ancient deed of penance<sup>75</sup>, this too could explain such a value judgement.

Regarding the spatial organisation, the atonement devotions can be held in an ecclesiastical (church, sacristy, prayer room) or paraliturgical environment. The sacral space of paraliturgical devotions is generally created by temporarily rearranging a room in the house or apartment. In the latter case permanent or temporary cultic/sacral spaces may be created. Rooms serving the purpose of the prayer occasion, respected as a chapel and resembling one in the furnishings are found less often.<sup>76</sup>

In 2009 an atonement community with virtual use of space was formed in Transylvania. The founding members of the Blessed Charles IV of Hungary “remote prayer group” are knights and dames of the Order of the Blessed Lady of Hungarians, Victorious Queen of the World, Holy Crown, who invite all those interested to join them on the second Thursday of every month in prayer for the revival of the Hungarian nation.<sup>77</sup>

A number of rosary devotions that specifically serve atonement are also widespread in the Székelyföld region. They include the Atonement, the Sacrifice and the Mystery of the Five Wounds of the Hungarian People rosary. The Atonement rosary consists of seven tenths, built up from parts of the Sorrowful, the Divine Mercy, the Sacred Wounds, the Deliverance, the Unity, the Flame of Love and the Mother of Tears rosaries, transmitted to a Sopron prayer community by Jesus in 2009.<sup>78</sup> The Sacrifice rosary consists of five tenths, that Jesus gave to a Hungarian woman in 2005 through “internal hearing”. It is recommended that this prayer undertaken for the physical and spiritual survival and revival of the Hungarian nation be said from three o’clock every Tuesday.<sup>79</sup> The rosary of the mystery of the five wounds of the Hungarian people is based on the theory of the mystery of the five wounds of the Hungarian people elaborated by an Austrian missionary serving in Hungary with the aim of strengthening the Hungarians’ sense of Marian, Christian identity.<sup>80</sup>

74 This atonement time is linked not only to the Fatima apparition but also to the apparition in Montichiari, Italy. Requests connected to the Rosa Mystica have multiple links to the 13<sup>th</sup> day (the 13<sup>th</sup> day of every month – Mary day, 13 July. – Rosa Mystica feast, 13 October – world atonement sacrifice day).

75 <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/V/virraszt%C3%A1s.html> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

76 A Charbel prayer house where prayers for peace and reconciliation were said on the first and third Saturday of every month for twenty years can be mentioned as an example. Another example is a “chapel” with features most closely resembling the Rosa Mystica cult, that has been used since 1991 for daily rosary community prayers.

77 <http://imalanc.ro/w/kezdolap/tavimacsportjaink/> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

78 <http://oratio.hu/r-olvaso08.php> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

79 <http://oratio.hu/r-nemzet01.php> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

80 The first edition of the prayer booklet on the rosary and the related theory appeared in 2003 followed by an expanded version in 2008. LANG 2003; 2008.



Atonement held together with the Act of Adoration on the 13<sup>th</sup> of each month in the side chapel of the Zetelaka/Zetea parish church. Zetelaka/Zetea, 2010. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN



Privately owned atonement chapel. Szentegyháza/Vlăhița, 2010. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN



The "altar" in a privately owned Charbel prayer house. Csíkszentdomokos/Sândominic, 1994.  
Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN



Devotions in a Charbel prayer house, showing the Atonement Prayer Hour prayer booklet and the Flame of Love rosary in use. All the participants are wearing the prescribed white headscarf. Csíkszentdomokos/Sândominic, 1994. Photo: Gabriella FÁBIÁN

According to his idea, with the Trianon peace treaty (1920) resulting in the loss of five parts of the country, Hungary received five wounds, that is, it was crucified, thereby reaching the highest degree of atonement sacrifice. Five Hungarian vocations<sup>81</sup> are expressed in the mysteries of the rosary, each fifth bead is followed by a medal bearing the portrait of a historical figure, a person of the church or a saint.<sup>82</sup>

As far as I know, the atonement practice performed in the sacristy of a parish church in the Székelyföld region<sup>83</sup> in the spirit of Christian unity, that is, for ethnic and denominational reconciliation, is unique. The members of their prayer group are women of different ethnic origin (Romanian, Hungarian) and denomination (Orthodox, Greek, and Roman Catholic). Their collective atonement devotions generally last an hour and a half and comprise rosary prayers and reading from scripture. The rosary tenths are said in Hungarian, Romanian and Latin.

<sup>81</sup> 1. possession of the Holy Crown, 2. being in close connection with the papacy, 3. being Mary's country of atonement, 4. being the bastion defending Europe, 5. being the legacy and property of Mary - Regnum Marianum.

<sup>82</sup> Cf.: LANG 2008. 9-113; LENGYEL 2006. 115.

<sup>83</sup> The community did not wish the name of the locality to be made public.

The Latin prayers were introduced with the help of a teacher of Latin and Romanian who sometimes takes part in the devotions; it was considered important to introduce them because they regard the Latin language as the purest, in the sense that it is the most free from sacrilegious words. The special feature of this form of prayer is that they not only pray in several languages (both alternately and simultaneously<sup>84</sup>), but also that they learn a given prayer in an unknown language. The difficulty they undertake adds to the value of the sacrifice.



Cover of the prayer booklet presenting the Mystery of the Five Wounds of the Hungarian People rosary.

## Penance as atonement sacrifice

Penance is atonement for sins committed. Its main actions can be: persevering performance of the commitments undertaken, patient bearing of difficulties, and fasting, alms-giving, and self-renunciation.<sup>85</sup> In the first centuries of Christianity, penance had to be done publicly and in cases for years, for grievous sins. "Private penance" was spread in Europe by Irish missionaries in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>86</sup> Mediaeval saints wore various pieces of penitential clothing or belts, slept on hard surfaces or on the ground.<sup>87</sup> Self-flagellation was at first performed by monks, then

<sup>84</sup> There are prayers that everyone says in their own mother tongue.

<sup>85</sup> <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/V/vezekl%C3%A9s.html> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church <http://www.katolikus.hu/kek/kek01420.html#K1438> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

<sup>87</sup> MAGYAR – HORVÁTH 2006. 80.

from the 10<sup>th</sup> century by devout lay persons. After major epidemics or natural disasters public atonement processions were also held, then under their influence various penitential societies were formed. Flagellation spread throughout Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>88</sup> despite repeated bans the custom survived in Hungary and the Székelyföld region up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>89</sup>

A frequent form of penance today is the Stations of the Cross. In the wake of pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the crusades it became a practice in Europe to set up a Way of the Cross. Up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century the forms set up generally had 7 stations, later this was expanded to 12 or 14 stations.<sup>90</sup> Together with the rosary, meditational prayers evoking Christ's passion are one of the most effective Catholic prayer practices, full indulgence can be earned with them.<sup>91</sup> They are most often performed during Lent and on pilgrimages.<sup>92</sup> The Way of the Cross offers a complex – verbal, spiritual, physical – meditation; it depends on the individual which of their different levels he or she is able and willing to experience.<sup>93</sup> The ways of the cross are formed in such a way that the topography in itself requires a physical sacrifice that can be combined with certain additional penances. Pilgrimages in the Székelyföld region generally link these practices to a particular shrine, the variant of walking on the knees is generally found in Fatima, walking barefoot in Medjugorje.<sup>94</sup> The various possibilities for practising atonement sacrifice are generally known and experienced in the different places where there have been Marian apparitions and at atonement places attracting people from a large catchment area. The pilgrimage itself can also be regarded as an atonement sacrifice. The religious actions undertaken on pilgrimages (prayer, Stations of the Cross), can be combined with offers of different degrees of physical hardship and self-denial, resulting in differing commitments. The leader of the community presented earlier and judged to be unique, besides following the example of Christ based on the virtues of obedience, purity and poverty, undertook to serve Christian unity and atonement. She distributed all her wealth and lives in a storeroom in the presbytery where she performs voluntary service. She lives entirely dependent on God, spending most of the day in prayer, often making pilgrimages to places of atonement and Marian apparitions, where she regularly undertakes additional penitence (for example walking the way of the cross on her knees)<sup>95</sup>. For some time now she has taken part in the perpetual Eucharistic adorations organised in the Queen of Peace Greek Catholic church in Temesvár. She has on occasion undertaken nones with atonement devotions on nine successive nights in nine different places of atonement. She regularly takes part in atonement devotions

88 KOVÁCS 1974. 47.

89 BÁLINT – BARNA 1994. 139-140.

90 LANTOSNÉ IMRE 1996. 139-140.

91 <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/K/kereszt%C3%BAti%20%C3%A1jtatoss%C3%A1g.html> Accessed on 03 September 2015.

92 KÖRPICS 2014. 232.

93 Cf.: KÖRPICS 2014. 232-234.

94 Similar examples from Hungary can be found in the writings discussing the practice of atonement. MAGYAR – HORVÁTH 2006. 149-150.

95 I was able to observe this atonement action on a number of occasions in Szőkefalva.



organised in the town, in some cases acting as the leader. Whenever she can, she attends the Eucharistic adorations held in the town's Greek Catholic church on Thursdays and on the first Saturday.

### Summing up

The apparitions of Mary in the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries increasingly draw attention to the sinfulness of people today, making reconciliation with God ever more necessary. The individual vision experiences echo the same messages. In the last thirty years in both Hungary and Transylvania we can observe the spread of movements trying to influence the correction of this disorder. Some also stress that it is the task of Hungary to perform this mission. The influence of the activity of three seers from Hungary (Natália Kovacsics Mária a nun, Erzsébet Szántó Mrs Károly Kindelmann and Mária Rogács Mrs Zoltán Takács), an Italian (Pierina Gilli), an Australian (Little Pebble) and two Transylvanian (Rozália Marian, Éva B. Madarász) seers can be observed in the atonement practice that has arisen in the Székelyföld over the past period of close to 30 years. The devotions have spread to 40% of the church communities in the Székelyföld region. The occasions were at first strictly paraliturgical but since then most of them have been incorporated into the church religious practice and there are also examples of initiatives from above. There has been a proliferation of vision experiences urging atonement, making it almost impossible to continue investigation into the interactions. The current practice is characterised by two kinds of ideology transmitting a denominational and an ethnic reconciliation, and emphasising the individual chosenness of the Hungarian people. It seemed to me to be worth throwing light on atonement practice in the Székelyföld region from the angle of sacrifice. By presenting various examples of two different acts, prayer and penance, I have tried to give an idea of the variety of atonement practice in the Székelyföld region.

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## PLACE NAMES IN HUNGARIAN AND ROMANIAN

County abbreviations: BN – Bács-Kiskun, HR – Harghita, MS – Mureș, PE – Pest, SJ – Sălaj

Country abbreviations: HU – Hungary, RO – Romania

Budapest, HU

Csíkmenaság, Armășeni, HR, RO

Csíksomlyó, Șumuleu Ciuc, HR, RO

Csíkszentdomokos, Sândominic, HR, RO

Csíkszentkirály, Sâncrăieni, HR, RO

Csíkszereda, Miercurea-Ciuc, HR, RO

Csíktaploca, Toplița-Ciuc, HR, RO

Érd, PE, HU

Homokkomárom, ZA, HU

Korond, Corund, HR, RO

Nyárádköszvényes, Mătrici, MS, RO

Nyárádremete, Eremitu, MS, RO

Sükösd, BN, HU

Szárhegy, Lăzarea, HR, RO

Szentegyháza, Vlăhița, HR, RO

Szilágynagyfalu, Nușfalău, SJ, RO

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Zetelaka, Zetea, HR, RO



## FROM THE SINGING RABBI TO THE KING OF HASIDIC REGGAE

**Abstract:** My study introduces three significant figures from the Jewish religious popular music scene (Shlomo Carlebach, Debbie Friedman and Matisyahu). Through these three case studies I examine the participants' understanding of music and how (religious) identities are defined and redefined through religious popular music. Questions of world views, religious attitudes, identities are brought to the fore. I would like to shed light on how the relationship to community, tradition and religious tradition is contested through Jewish religious popular music.

**Keywords:** Jewish religious popular music, religious modernization, vernacular religion

It is well known that every period leaves its own imprint on religiosity and as a result the lived, vernacular level<sup>1</sup> of religion is never static and unchanged – although this is not always reflected in the official religious documents – it is being shaped in constant movement. This could be observed in the case of earlier, so-called popular religion and it can be observed in the lived religion of the present time. Although vernacular or lived religion often contained forms incompatible with official dogmas, it can perhaps be said that such a great variety and transformation as can be observed in lived religion today did not occur in earlier historical periods. This phenomenon has a number of well known cultural causes, the strongest of which is that mass culture and the mass media have seeped into the so-called “religious market” as well, where they have a considerable influence especially on the artistic dimension of vernacular religion (see, for example, works of religious popular art, or the so-called “religious kitsch” phenomenon).<sup>2</sup> This kind of interaction can perhaps be examined most readily through the phenomenon of “religious popular music”, as from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century all the secular music styles – rock and roll, later pop, rap etc. – have had religious parallels.

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: povedakkinga@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> The concept of vernacular religion was first introduced by Leonard Norman Primiano (PRIMIANO 1995). The term refers to the syncretic form of lived religion, in everyday life, found at the individual level.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of Christianity this has been examined, among others, by McDANNELL 1995; MORGAN 1998.

In the case of Christianity, the international literature on religious studies deals at considerable length with the process whereby the connection between religion and music enters into discourse with the problem of modernity,<sup>3</sup> and in what way the new actors on the contemporary religious market are linked to different music styles,<sup>4</sup> but at the same time research into Jewish religious parallels has been far more superficial.<sup>5</sup> In part this is due to the fact that Jewish religious ethnomusicology itself has only a short past, and it is practically only in the past decade that popular music elements have appeared here in a religious guise.<sup>6</sup> International researchers have turned their attention mainly to the spread and use of klezmer music, and to the klezmer revival,<sup>7</sup> while the contemporary Jewish religious inculturation of more recent popular music genres has only just started.<sup>8</sup>

In this short article I would like to give an idea, through Jewish religious popular music, of the religious transformation that is taking place under the circumstances of late modernity. My aim is to use case studies to throw a sharper light on that process at the macro level, to show how lived religion responds to aspects of modernisation, and how crisis situations arise between representatives of the so-called traditionalist trends – who emphasise the threat arising from the dismantling of traditions – and those who see a positive opportunity in the transformation. I wish to examine this here through the reception of the new trends in religious music.

The products of religious popular arts are understood to be works with religious content and religious purpose produced in late modernity within the frames of mass culture, according to its operating mechanism and rules, that clearly reflect both the characteristics and changes of the wider cultural context and the value preferences of “consumers” of the given works. Naturally, a complex analysis of the vernacular religion of late modernity cannot be made within the frame of this short article, but the case studies to be presented can give a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the religious motivations and religious experiences and communities behind the process.<sup>9</sup>

3 Among others: EVANS 2006; ROMANOWSKI 2000.

4 Examples are reggae and Rastafarianism, black metal and Satanism or neo-paganism, and the clearly observable intertwining of psychedelic trance music and neo-shamanism.

5 Among others: ARIEL 2003; KAHN-HARRIS 2009; 2012; WAGNER et al. 2013; WOOD 2007.

6 This may appear strange in view of the fact that Jewish performers, producers and songwriters have been active in shaping contemporary pop music, but they did so without stressing or acknowledging their ethnic identity. This is one of the reasons why, apart from klezmer, there is practically no other global Jewish music phenomenon on the world pop music scene, created by Jewish performers for a Jewish consumer base and that is also an important factor commercially outside Israel. KAHN-HARRIS 2011. 74.

7 Many people regard klezmer as the most significant manifestation of Jewish non-religious music. BOSSIUS – KAHN-HARRIS – HÄGER 2011. 6.

8 KAHN-HARRIS 2009; 2012.

9 Online-anthropological methods (content analysis of numerous websites and forums, analysis of videos), and personal depth interviews in Budapest were the main methods used in writing this article. I wish to thank chief cantor László FEKETE, Dániel DAN, Andrea DEÁK and András ZIMA for the information they provided.

## **The feminist guitarist, the singing rabbi and the king of Hassid reggae**

In January 2011 media around the world reported the sad news of the death of the Jewish singer Debbie Friedman. A few months later the musical *Soul Doctor* based on the figure and work of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach was staged on Broadway. One of the best known showmen, Larry King also reported on the musical in his programme. As he said, this was the first thoroughly Jewish musical since *Fiddler on the Roof*.<sup>10</sup> In December of the same year the local Csongrád County daily paper reported the sensation that Matisyahu, the Orthodox Jewish reggae singer had shaved his emblematic beard.<sup>11</sup>

If we connect the three, otherwise entirely separate news items, we can immediately draw several conclusions that appear straightforward at first sight. Firstly they can create the appearance that the mass media and the use of today's accelerating modernisation techniques are strengthening the presence of religions in popular culture. This could also be supported by the fact that recently a growing number of researchers have turned their attention to the connection between religion and mass culture. Whole volumes of studies have been published on the impact of the media, principally the internet, on how the churches are trying to be present in virtual space, what religious content appears in various films and popular music genres.<sup>12</sup> Secondly it can lead to the conclusion that the churches can only survive and retain their popularity if they make use of these new trends associated with popular culture as there is a growing demand for them among young people. But is that really the case? Does the contact of the latest achievements of modernisation and mass culture with religion really cause the upswing of religion? Can it be established beyond doubt that this kind of change is the instrument of renewal? Are the younger generations really open to this "new style"?

The Jewish religion can offer a good ground in many respects for answering these questions. Firstly, living in diaspora has always had a two-fold effect on Jews: they had to adapt to local circumstances but only as far as they retained their Jewish identity. Secondly, Jewish religious music was perhaps always more open to adapting secular music trends. This can be clearly seen in the fact that local folk music motifs and later pieces from opera and operetta appeared in the repertoire of musically educated cantors. Thirdly, because in much of Jewish history right up to the present in many cases the boundaries between the religious and the secular were not clearly drawn.

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10 <http://www.examiner.com/article/first-major-jewish-themed-musical-soul-doctor-hits-colony-and-parker-playhouse> Accessed on 20 December 2013.

11 [http://www.delmagyar.hu/ezmilyen/a\\_zsido\\_reggae-sztar\\_leborotvalta\\_ikonikus\\_szakallat/2254547/](http://www.delmagyar.hu/ezmilyen/a_zsido_reggae-sztar_leborotvalta_ikonikus_szakallat/2254547/) Accessed on 20 December 2013.

12 Among others, FORBES — MAHAN 2005; MAZUR — MCCARTHY 2011.

This is the case also in the subject of our analysis: singers and composers who have had perhaps the greatest impact on contemporary Jewish religious music, and whose influence was aptly described by Kligman as “pioneers of religious revival”<sup>13</sup>. Debbie Friedman’s name and musical style is perhaps little known among Hungarian Jews, but she can be regarded as one of the driving forces of the music of American reform Jews and among those who launched Jewish religious popular music. Her best known composition is the “Mi Shebeirach” (prayer for healing), used in hundreds of congregations all over the US. A few Orthodox communities also use her songs, although her person is not unequivocally accepted among Jews as a whole. She is popular mainly in the liberal, reform branch of Judaism.<sup>14</sup> She has created an entirely new Jewish music with her songs. She has set prayers and ancient teachings to music in the style of 1960s American protest songs, in which Jewish music traditions can no longer be felt. She was the first songwriter to use mixed English and Hebrew texts. Some of her album titles reflect the message of her songs, among others: *Songs of the Spirit, Light These Lights, The Water in the Well, The World of Your Dreams, And You Shall Be a Blessing, Sing Unto God, As You Go On Your Way: Shacharit - The Morning Prayers, It’s You*. Besides all this, Debbie Friedman was openly feminist. Her afterlife and the influence she has had on religious music can be seen in the fact that the former Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion’s School of Sacred Music New York is now known as the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music. Her funeral service was followed live on internet alone by 7000 people.

The name of Shlomo Carlebach is well known in Jewish circles. As one of my informants put it: “probably the eighty-year-old diamond merchant in Antwerp, or a Jew in Jerusalem and one in Johannesburg all know Shlomo Carlebach.”<sup>15</sup> Many go so far as to consider that Carlebach was the most influential Jewish composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However we evaluate his musical achievement, there can be no doubt that almost everybody, from reform communities to Hasidic communities uses the *Carlebach nigunim*. In reform communities even the entire liturgy may be based musically on Carlebach’s melodies, while the stricter communities tend to use them mainly for paraliturgical occasions or outside the liturgy.

Shlomo Carlebach was born in Berlin in 1925, later together with his family he reached Switzerland through Lithuania and Austria, and eventually settled in New York. His father was an Orthodox rabbi. Shlomo Carlebach went to Berkeley for the 1966 Folk Festival. Later he decided to settle there and try to set the lost Jewish souls – drug addicts and drifting youth – on a better path. In San Francisco his local followers opened the “House of Love and Prayer” centre where they attracted young people with music, dance and community gatherings. He became known as a singing rabbi. His tuneful melodies and texts inspired thousands of Jewish youth and adults and led them back to their lost religion. Carlebach’s songs are easy to learn, they have a short and often repeated melody and

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13 KLIGMAN 2001.

14 The ambivalent attitude towards her can be seen in the essay by KAHN-HARRIS 2011.

15 Budapest, 3 December 2011.

traditional texts. They have become an integral part of prayer occasions in many synagogues around the world. As Weiss also stresses, one of the keys to their rapid spread and popularity is the musical and spiritual vacuum that characterised Jewish people in the years following the Holocaust; Carlebach's melodies filled this vacuum well with their easily grasped, logical structure that could be readily fitted into any Jewish tradition in the world (Western, Eastern, Ashkenazi, Sephardic).<sup>16</sup>

Surprisingly, compared to the influence he has had on Jewish popular music, little has been written about Carlebach who is regarded as the father of Jewish religious popular music.<sup>17</sup> The reason for this is perhaps, as mentioned earlier, that Jewish ethnomusicology is a relatively new research field. But it must be added that, to form a picture of his afterlife, we must turn not so much to analyses in the literature but rather to how he appears in collective memory. Of special significance here is the musical about Carlebach already mentioned, "Soul Doctor – Journey of a Rockstar Rabbi", that is still played on Broadway. His person is also important because many cantors in the classical sense now use Carlebach melodies. His legendary personality and his influence is reflected in the *Carlebach minyanim* that have inspired and move a broad spectrum of Jews. As Kligman too stresses, most of Carlebach's melodies have become fully incorporated and accepted songs in the synagogues, at weddings and Jewish events to such an extent that people who hear them often think they are traditional Jewish melodies, not compositions barely a few decades old.<sup>18</sup>

Matisyahu was born as Matthew Paul Miller. He attended a Jewish religious school but as a teenager turned away from what he had been taught, was expelled from the school and began to take drugs. In 1995 he took part in a two-month school program in Israel exploring Jewish identity and under its influence he returned to his faith. First he attended the Carlebach Shul in Manhattan and formed a band. Later he joined the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic trend. His unique style combines traditional Jewish elements with elements of reggae and rock. He quickly became world famous. In 2006 Billboard music magazine named him "Top Reggae Artist". On his tours he fills vast halls. It is a good indication of his popularity that in 2015 30 million people saw and listened to his most popular music video on YouTube.<sup>19</sup> He attracts several hundred new followers a day on Facebook. In 2010 he gave a successful concert in the Syma Hall in Hungary.

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16 [http://www.klezmershack.com/articles/weiss\\_s/carlebach/](http://www.klezmershack.com/articles/weiss_s/carlebach/) Accessed on 27 March 2014.

17 He issued around 25 albums and recorded only a small fraction of his 1000 – 4000 compositions.

18 KLIGMAN 2001. 102.

19 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRmBChQjZPs> Accessed on 12 November 2015.

## Community reception

Now it is worth examining what role the subjects of our investigation have played and continue to play in religious and non-religious Jewish life at home and abroad. It is worth stressing that, apart from the different branches of Judaism, considerable differences can be observed between the opinions here, depending on the culture or region from which they originate. This is confirmed by Kahn-Harris's study of the negative reception of Friedman found among Jews in the UK. The author shows that because of the openness characterising American culture, American Jews had a basically positive attitude towards her, while she was firmly rejected by the more conservative British.<sup>20</sup>

Accordingly, the recorded interviews, questionnaires and the thematic forums on online community portals show a complex picture, even if we leave out of account the opinions that are simply expressions of liking the music, or in the case of Matisyahu come from fans, as well as those that report superficially that a song by one of the performers changed their life, gave them new hope or "brought light to their souls".

"He's also showed me there is always room in your heart for hope. I stopped writing music for a little bit, and after listening to him I decided I'd start up again and give my band another shot. Well, I can say that Matis has truly motivated me. I first began to listen to him because of the great solos and instrumentation in *Live at Stubbs*. But then I actually began to listen to the lyrics and they have so much meaning. Any day that I feel down, I can just listen to his music and it lifts my spirit.

Matisyahu has inspired me to be a better person. He has truly been a 'refuge for me' he has been the 'light' in my soul. And for that I give my thanks and prayers to you for life. You are amazing.

It helps me relax after a stressful day or it can just bring a smile to my face on a sad day."<sup>21</sup>

"DEAR HOLY REB SHLOMO, WE LOVE YOU AND MISS YOU TERRIBLY

Some days it's ok. I hear her voice and it pushes me on through some of the hills and valleys of my life."<sup>22</sup>

Some of the comments support our hypothesis that within certain limits, religions have to find the language of the given time in the circumstances of the age, in which they can address the people of their time. In this way it can be said that

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<sup>20</sup> KAHN-HARRIS 2011.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRmBChQjZPs> Accessed on 28 March 2014.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.lindakwertheimer.com/?p=264> Accessed on 25 August 2015.

the songs of Debbie Friedman make people feel at home in a liturgy, they are able to pray through her, they are able to turn to the Everlasting through her songs. They also help their religious self-expression.

"To me, Debbie Friedman's songs are the sounds of Judaism that I know. When I've gone into a temple that isn't using them, I don't feel at home.

Her music infused a new spirituality into the words of our traditional tefilot and empowered a generation of Jewish women. She will be missed, but she will continue to inspire our children, much the same as she inspired us."<sup>23</sup>

"I live on a college campus so it is hard to find time to just get away and think about God. However I can listen to Matisyahu anywhere and feel like I am alone with God. Whatever mood I'm in I can listen to Matisyahu and enjoy my day better and feel a closer connection to God.

I saw Matisyahu for my 2nd time in Kansas City, MO and there was nothing more moving than hearing 'One Day' as the sun began to set...he turned to face the sun and smiled and as I looked around there were so many people of different ages and places in life with tears in their eyes. You are touching many. As a 35-year-old mother of 2 beautiful little girls 'One Day' is my true wish and always has been..."<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, one can clearly feel from them that for people today the persons who function as identification models often come through the new channels of mass communication, through the new music styles.

"But because I am by G-d's grace a believer in faith, in knowing what comes, comes from G-d. And when we lose a loved one, be it friend, family, or someone like Debbie, it is because of that very G-d's grace, and is G-d's way of preparing us to do just what Debbie did with and what she gave to us for as long as G-d allowed."<sup>25</sup>

"Debbie Friedman played an integral role in the development of my Jewish identity."<sup>26</sup>

"She meant a great deal to me in my Jewish identity as a teen and adult."<sup>27</sup>

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23 [http://www.jewishjournal.com/debbie\\_friedman\\_tributes/article/remembering\\_debbie\\_friedman\\_a\\_collection\\_from\\_community\\_leaders\\_20110110/](http://www.jewishjournal.com/debbie_friedman_tributes/article/remembering_debbie_friedman_a_collection_from_community_leaders_20110110/) Accessed on 28 March 2014.

24 <http://matisyahuworld.com/community/forum/viewthread/105/P15> Accessed on 8 February 2012.

25 <http://www.lindakwertheimer.com/?p=264> Accessed on 28 March 2014.

26 <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postmortem/2011/01/jewish-folk-singer-debbie-frie.html> Accessed on 25 August 2015.

27 <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postmortem/2011/01/jewish-folk-singer-debbie-frie.html> Accessed on 25 August 2015.



This identification model very often points beyond religion. We can see that many people regard Debbie Friedman as a model to be followed for her feminism, while the attachment to Jewish ethnic identity or their rediscovery of the tradition of Matisyahu or Carlebach can even serve as a model for non-religious Jews. I even found a comment reporting that the writer turned to the Lubavitchers under the influence of Matisyahu's music.

"she had a large impact [in] Modern Orthodox shuls, women's tefillah [prayer], the Orthodox feminist circles.... She was a religious bard and angel for the entire community."

"As a Jewess, a feminist, a nurse, a daughter, granddaughter, sister, wife and mother I reached to Debbie's (of blessed memory) music to learn, to grow, to heal, to emulate, to carry tradition, to share experience, to cherish, to be an example and teach my children to do the same."<sup>28</sup>

"About 7 years ago, My friend who is a member of Lubavitch Chasidus, introduced me to his music, and turned me on to Matisyahu. A year later, I adopted myself to Chasidus and I am learning something each day. Being that I was in a strict Orthodox School Environment, I had my thoughts of going off the "Big D" because of pressure, and more pressure, But Chasidus brought out the truth. Matisyahu brought out the truth, and I personally want to thank Matisyahu (I thanked him in person but I want to thank him again now) for showing me the road to Light! You are a true Shliach in my heart, and many others!"

"first started listening to a couple of his songs like king without a crown and youth, but listening to jerusalem really opened up my eyes to my jewish heritage. It showed me how important it is not to forget your heritage and how Remembering your religions past is so important."<sup>29</sup>

These opinions are in line with the hypotheses postulated by Summit, who attempts to demonstrate that musical choice is not merely the result of religious identity, but at the same time it has an influence on that identity, in many cases fundamentally determining it.<sup>30</sup>

"You won't believe it, but I went out and bought his records. They're all here: Youth, and Light too. At the age of seventy-five... If nothing else, just for the sake of the title of the first record. Do you know what a great thing that boy did? He brought something very

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28 <http://www.lindakwertheimer.com/?p=264> Accessed on 25 August 2015.

29 <http://matisyahuworld.com/community/forum/viewthread/105/P15> Accessed on 25 August 2015.

30 SUMMIT 2000.

old in a very new form. And as I heard it, with absolute authenticity. He was a rebel, and he still is... Even with a hat, black suit, white shirt and beard. Tzitzit and reggae, that's really something! [...] why can't you find these old things in such a modern way in Hungarian? Why does everything appear much more pathetic? Why are the Jews sometimes so elderly-like, and why are they so youthful and winning in English?"<sup>31</sup>

Several explanations can be given for this Hungarian-American difference. It is, however, obvious that in the West religion has retained its continuity, its presence in everyday life that enabled religion and religiosity to be modernised in an organic way. While the continuity of the religious chain was not broken among Western Jewry after the Holocaust, among Hungarians this has caused multiple problems arising from the historical circumstances.

## Interpretation

Modernisation and mutual influences among religions are not a new phenomenon. In all periods achievements in technology/civilisation also had an impact on religiosity. These transformations can be clearly observed, among others, in the changes in religious music. Just as the different historical periods have religious popular songs in their own style in the case of Christianity, we find the same phenomenon clearly in evidence in Jewish music too. We know in the case of Jewish music that the *Nusach* allows the possibility of improvisation as long as the character remains within recognisable frames, or if it dances away from them it finds its way back at the blessing sentence. However, the closed melodies inserted in this way in the stream of prayer depend to a great extent on the culture. In Hungary it is typically Central East European folk music that appeared, then in the last 100-150 years also works of art music. Probably in all periods these processes evoked ambivalent reactions among those belonging to the different trends of Judaism. In addition, in the accelerated pace of today's world, these changes, new demands and new styles pile up and demand with growing urgency the appearance and use of the "new" and "modern".

Debbie Friedman, for example, can be regarded as one of the spokespersons of emancipation and feminism. Religious feminism, the search for female roles and efforts to place greater emphasis on the presence of women can be observed in trends from esoterism, through neo-paganism, right up to Christianity and Judaism. Friedman took part in the democratisation of the reform/progressive branch of Judaism at a time when, in the early 1970s, the ordination of women as rabbis had only just begun. According to Keith Kahn-Harris her work was greatly helped by the move towards the egalitarian ceremony. She was the first women

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31 [http://www.litera.hu/hirek/majd\\_egyszer](http://www.litera.hu/hirek/majd_egyszer) Accessed on 28 March 2014.

to exercise a big influence on the liturgy of reform Judaism, and in addition was also lesbian, although not openly. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that while Friedman was a well known and popular figure, judgement of her was far more ambivalent than it was of her contemporary, Carlebach. The reason for this must also be sought in their similar but not entirely identical responses to the new circumstances. Although Friedman openly accepted her Jewish identity and thereby served as a point of orientation for many seeking Jews, in her music it was mainly only the text that was linked to the authentic tradition – and even there not always, while her melodies broke away from it. She was influenced mainly by the American folk-song revival of the 1960s, such as the music of Joan Baez or Bob Dylan, making her style just as “happy clappy” as the Christian popular music.

It is interesting that this process of revival and within it the Christian popular music, the Jewish Friedman and Carlebach, were in close ideological connection with the hippie movement of the period. Like the Christian “Jesus movement”, the “Hasidic hippie” movement radiating out from Carlebach’s “House of Love and Prayer” centre in San Francisco was a community of religious “hippies” who discovered the eastern religions in their spiritual quest but experienced spiritual fulfilment within Jewish religious frames and openly embraced their religious identity before the wider public. As Ariel also emphasised in his study *Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius*, they blended the various eastern religious practices (energy transmission, incense burning, yoga, meditation) into their own religious frames, their own lived Jewish religion.<sup>32</sup> These religious hippies are thus not merely a new trend within mass cultural fashion, they are genuinely identity seekers, a group wishing to give an answer to the current problems and challenges of the time within the frames of religion, before the public. In this way the rock and roll music of the period did not remain simply secular music, its religious parallel – “Christian popular music” and “Jewish popular music” – appeared at practically the same time, also within the liturgy.

Carlebach and Friedman too are linked principally to this phenomenon, but in contrast to Friedman, Carlebach built to a considerable extent on authentic Jewish traditions. One important difference right from the start is that Carlebach sang not in English but in Hebrew. He made use of Hasidic traditions and modified them to bring them into line with the values of the new generation, reshaping and “reinventing” the tradition.<sup>33</sup> Carlebach gave his own messages and those of the counterculture into the mouths of the Hasidic founding fathers. He took his place in the long tradition of Hasidic storytelling. He introduced innovations into the religious context, previously unknown genre elements of mass culture, and interestingly these songs in turn have an influence on classical cantor art, they are becoming incorporated in the same natural way that each age created religious syncretism in the vernacular or lived religion, often without the believers even being aware of the borrowing. In this way Carlebach innovated without bringing tradition and the modern into conflict, organically incorporating the new approach.

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32 ARIEL 2003.

33 ARIEL 2003: 28.

The Jewish music world shines through his style and the psalms can also be felt behind it. His vehicle and communication channel is a stirring musicality, but at the same time, as a spiritual leader, a rabbi, he teaches his listeners. Because of this organic character, Jewish communities from reform to orthodox all recognise it and incorporate it into their melodic world.

To a certain extent Matisyahu can also be linked to the phenomenon of Friedman and Carlebach. Like Friedman, Matisyahu uses a musical genre entirely foreign to Jewish tradition. While Friedman was the first woman to sing Jewish religious texts in American folk style, making them attractive and popular, Matisyahu is a pioneering actor in the contemporary mainstream, the secular music industry. He fills reggae and rap melodies with traditional Jewish values. Like Carlebach, Matisyahu also unequivocally represents his religious allegiance. His attachment to modernity is manifested practically in that he conveys his message in a style of contemporary music. They all personally address the listener with and in their songs, they speak to the individual, building on what is lacking in the age of alienation. Of course, there are also numerous obvious differences arising from the cultural changes that have taken place over close to half a century. One such trend has been the continuous laicisation, a weakening of religiosity attached to the institution, the crisis of identity leading to cosmopolitanism.<sup>34</sup> Matisyahu's reception base is no longer solely religious Jews, indeed perhaps it is not even principally religious Jews. Moreover, it may be surprising to the outsider, but his aim may not necessarily be to convert irreligious Jews. Jewish popular music also has a function of preserving Jewish identity, with which it also reaches out to secularised Jews. They are the irreligious groups who try to strengthen their ethnic identity weakened by the cosmopolitanism of globalisation, through the modern but essentially authentic phenomenon of Jewish religious popular music. They see and hear on the basis of the Jewish external signs that this is an unequivocal identification model, nevertheless it is able to reach them by corresponding to their own aesthetic taste derived from mass culture. Thus, in practice, this process too is part of the deprivatisation of religion about which José Casanova wrote.<sup>35</sup> A young Hasidic man openly embraces his faith, his religious views, becoming a star and identification model,<sup>36</sup> and many of his fans and listeners experience their own Jewishness through his, he creates for them a link in the chain towards the weakened tradition.

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34 DAVIE 2010.

35 CASANOVA 1994.

36 On the stars as identification models, see Povedák 2011.

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## MYTHICISED HISTORY

### THE DECONSTRUCTED – RECONSTRUCTED LEGEND OF SAINT STEPHEN

**Abstract:** Paradigmatic cultural and political changes always influence perception of the past. The changing world-view brings a continuous reinterpretation of history. In this process the judgement of historical figures may change, they may undergo a continuous process of heroisation or deheroisation. In extreme cases heroes may become antiheroes, and antiheroes become heroes. An excellent example of this process is the legend of the Hungarian ruler Saint Stephen (997-1038) now being shaped, which throws light on the driving forces behind the changing vernacular view of history. In it we can see not only the characteristics of the emerging new myths but also the political and religious motivations behind the reinterpretation of history.

**Keywords:** modern mythology, contemporary paganism, neonationalism, hero cult, Saint Stephen, “István, a király” rock opera.

It is regarded as natural that sudden cultural and social changes make people uncertain. Some people feel frustration at the unknown phenomena that appear, the way the rhythm of life seems to have been jolted out of its accustomed pace, or the apparent disruption of ingrained cultural patterns. Society may give many different responses to overcoming the fears and uncertainties caused by crisis: there may be an increase in the number of people turning to religion as a refuge, support for certain political movements may increase, grassroots initiatives may strengthen, or greater value may be attached to the role of traditions. Theories are often put forward in an attempt to explain the cause of the changes, how they are happening and their possible consequences. Often in seeking to break away from everyday reality they paint a vision of an idyllic historical age, one in which the conflicts, hostilities and misery of the present were still unknown. This kind of romantic, idealising approach based on inadequate knowledge often places history in a mythical dimension, creating a more or less false image of the past in which a fragmentary knowledge of history is shaped into a complete whole. Such reinterpretation of the past always reflects the processes of the present and tries to give

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: povedakistvan@gmail.com

an answer to the questions of the here and now. The remythologisation of history also opens up the possibility for a deeper knowledge of the present.

For a number of reasons the figure of Saint Stephen (István) (997-1038), the ruler who converted the Hungarians to Christianity and founded the state, was predestined to continuous remythologisation, despite the fact that his presence in popular culture, folklore and vernacular religion in recent centuries has been insignificant compared to that of other Hungarian saints (e.g. Saint Ladislás), rulers (Matthias Hunyadi), or other historical figures (e.g. Ferenc Rákóczi, Lajos Kossuth). However, in our case the question is not whether the figure of Saint Stephen was alive in the folklore of the recent past, whether his cult had survived, but how and why it had begun to flourish again as a kind of revival phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> One obvious cause is that his life and deeds are linked to a turning point in history, so it is inevitable that official politics and religion have always preserved his memory. In this way he remained an active figure in historical memory despite the fact that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century his popular cult and myths about him had practically disappeared from folklore. On the other hand however, this incomplete knowledge – combined with the fact that the attitude to Saint Stephen of the powers that be changed several times over the past century – opened the way for the emergence of differing opinions and in the final step for his remythologisation.<sup>2</sup> A homogenous, positive attitude towards him existed as long as the state functioned on basically Christian foundations and Stephen's foundation of the state and his adoption of the Christian faith were the bedrock of national identity. However, with the shrinking of the Christian ideological basis, on the one hand all this became heterogeneous and on the other its rootedness in society as a whole became shallower. But it did not disappear entirely, even in times when the regime in power – specifically the Communist Rákosi dictatorship<sup>3</sup> – strove to ignore the Christian content. But even though the designation "Saint" was removed from all history books, it was impossible to deny the fact that he was the founder of the state, or his role in bringing about a complete change of direction marking the beginning of a new era. Even stripped of some of his attributes he remained a figure in national historical memory, with a background of symbolic meaning that could be reactivated at any time. The question

1 Basically two ideas have been put forward on this topic. In his writings Zoltán MAGYAR noted that although the corpus of tradition that arose around the figure of Saint Stephen was smaller than in the case of other outstanding historical figures, elements of folk poetry, beliefs and customs can all be found in the folklore tradition right up to the present. According to Magyar, beside the official church cult of Saint Stephen, there also existed a "vernacular" cult of Saint Stephen even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced among others by the hundreds of churches named after him, and the popularity of the name István (Stephen) (MAGYAR 2000. 7-9), while religious ethnological aspects of his cult are still alive today (MAGYAR 2000. 224). In contrast Vilmos VOIGT is far more sceptical on the question, and on the basis of historical-folkloristic considerations he makes a distinction between the so-called official state and church cult or memory, and the existent or non-existent cult of Stephen among the common people independently of or beside the former. On the basis of material collected by Ferenc MÓRA, Margit LUBY, Gyula ORTUTAY or Ildikó LANDGRAF, VOIGT also emphasises that the figure of Saint Stephen in folklore died out well before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. VOIGT 2004. 290-308.

2 Incomplete knowledge is a basic condition for the emergence of myths and beliefs. VOIGT 1980.

3 MÁTYÁS RÁKOSI was the head of the Communist dictatorship in 1948-1956.

was merely when and what kind of mythological meaning this demythologised figure would acquire. In addition to these factors, his historical role also predestined him for remythologisation. Besides the incomplete knowledge, the fact that he ruled in a period of transition, he closed one era and launched another with his deeds lend themselves to the creation of mythologies.<sup>4</sup>

## Rock and politics

The first spark in this process came from the rock opera *István, a király* (Stephen the King).<sup>5</sup> An examination of its reception and later development shows that it acted as the catalyst in the remythologisation of Stephen: it launched the process, reactivated the figures and ideologies, and paved the way for demands for further remythologisation. All this occurred not only within the mother country but also had a clearly perceivable effect within the diaspora<sup>6</sup>. It is important for an understanding of the fuller picture to know that the appearance of *Stephen the King* was also part of a political process, the fact that it could appear can be attributed in large part to the waning of the Kádár era and the weakening of its ideological control. As though to demonstrate its own reform spirit, from the 1970s the regime gave a growing number of possibilities for the publication of writings on historical topics,<sup>7</sup> and the premiere of the rock opera in 1983 can be regarded as the culmination of this process. In most cases the appearance of historical heroes in genres of mass culture is not only intended to provide entertainment or disseminate knowledge of history, it usually has deeper motivations. In the Kádár era's<sup>8</sup> period of relaxation (and also in the case of other authoritarian regimes) the mass culture genres could also serve to handle correlations between the authorities and

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4 Certain events, such as transitions between different historical periods, also favour the emergence of mythologies. See: KAPITÁNY – KAPITÁNY 2001. 127-145.

5 The rock opera *István, a király* (Stephen the King) was composed by the iconic musicians of the 1970s-80s, Levente Szörényi and János Bródy on the basis of a drama by Miklós Boldizsár. The world premiere was held in Budapest on 18 August 1983. Since then the mound chosen as the venue for the performance has been officially named Royal Mound. The musical was seen by 120,000 people in 1983. The LP sold millions of copies and the film of the musical was seen by more than 1 million in cinemas. The rock opera told the story of how Stephen came to power and his struggle with Koppány, his rival. It also interprets the struggle for power as a conflict between conversion to the Christian faith and remaining in the old beliefs.

6 Fewer than 10 million of the roughly 14 million Hungarians live in the territory of Hungary. Since the Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920) many of them constitute the largest minority in the neighbouring countries. During the Second World War and the 1956 Revolution further hundreds of thousands fled to the United States and democratic states of Western Europe.

7 It should not be forgotten that the debate that arose from the first major response to the new Hungarian mythology also took place during this period! See: KOMORÓCZY 1976. In this debate Komoróczy refuted the views of the alternative historian Badinyi Jós who was still living in emigration at the time. Nevertheless, although this debate was opened by the Assyriologist and Hebraist Professor Komoróczy, he unwittingly gave Badinyi Jós a chance to spread his views, that first reached a wider public in Hungary through that book!

8 János KÁDÁR was a socialist politician, Hungary's leader from the crushing of the 1956 revolution and freedom struggle up to May 1988.

the masses, between the official and the lived national consciousness.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the best gauge of this is the rock opera *Stephen the King*: its reception in official and popular culture in the period of socialism wished to keep the changes in national consciousness and their internal tensions under state control. As Jávorszky recalled in this connection the opinion of samizdat circles at the time:

“the political leadership considers it advisable to open the valve of nationalism a little from time to time. *Stephen the King* offered the first occasion to try this. The essence of the method was to use Hungarian history and the sentiments that could be evoked from it as a means of relieving tensions arising within the society.”<sup>10</sup>

And seeing the reactions at the time, the intense, delighted mood<sup>11</sup> it can be said that the rock opera – making use of the “language” of popular culture of the period, its demands, its taste, and in the final analysis, of fashion – had a far more liberating effect on national consciousness than perhaps those in power could have imagined. The unprecedented success of the rock opera, the concert film made of it and the LP was obviously not only due to the music. Kipke also noted in 1983 in the columns of the Catholic periodical *Új Ember* that

“It was national sentiments that brought the rock fans and even more the older generations out to the City Park.”<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps a correspondent defined most precisely the effect the opera had on masses at the time:

“It became a festive ceremony, not only evoking but also realising the direct human togetherness, the experience of community of real feasts, linking the eternal festive with the tradition of the beat festival [...] For the audience the end of the performance created a community not only in the musical experience but also in the sentiment of belonging to the national community.”<sup>13</sup>

9 It is worth thinking here, among others of the delayed release of the Hungarian cult film *The Witness* by Bacsó that was made in 1969 but was not allowed to be shown until 1979, the limited concert opportunities allowed in the 1980s for performers of rock music that had earlier been classified as underground, or even the relative freedom given to religious revival that did not show signs of nationalism but had earlier been strongly controlled.

10 The article published in *Népszabadság* on 19 August 2002 is available at: <http://www.jbsz.hu/interjuk/regmult-/463-istvan-a-kiraly-koppany-a-szupersztar.html> Accessed on: 1 October 2015.

11 KOLTAY 1984 published a detailed selection from contemporary newspapers and readers' reactions.

12 The article by Tamás KIPKE that appeared on 11 September 1983 is included in KOLTAY 1984. 33.

13 Contribution by Tamás FEITL in the 21 October 1983 issue of *Magyar Ifjúság*. Published in KOLTAY 1984. 83. It should be noted at this point that already from the 1970s the regime gradually allowed scope for interest in the historical past. The number of books and theatre performances with a historical aspect increased, and in the final analysis the launching of the dance house movement can also be regarded as part of this process.

For remythologisation to work, the presentness of history in the everyday present, the search of people in the present for contact with the given historical period are needed. If it is able to actualise the historical figure for everyday reality, that figure can once again enter into the stream of lived culture. This happened with the figure of Saint Stephen too, it was brought to life by the “opening of the ideological valve” in the Kádár era. It is inevitable that under the circumstances of the given period, the connection between past and present was manifested not as a guide to be followed, but as a work having a hidden meaning of current political relevance. In the words of Jávorszky

“Stephen the King is an epochal work. And as such, its interpretation is necessarily plural – everyone approaches it with their own emotions, ideas, sins and desires. In this way over the years it acquired a life of its own in the political sense: everyone thought about it and projected into it what they wanted (or what they were not ashamed to).”<sup>14</sup>

All this happened in spite of the fact that the opera itself did not in reality carry a coded message of current political relevance. Sebők pointed out that in 1983 the crowd gathered on the Royal Mound

“was not only able to see the most memorable performance in Hungarian rock history, but also to experience the biggest mass cultural demonstration of the Kádár era. The storm of applause that followed the national anthem at the end of the performance was a kind of liberation from all the suppressed burdens of conscience of the previous decades.”<sup>15</sup>

As Szörényi who composed the music said, the current political mythologisation of the work began even before the premiere: “word came from Köztársaság tér [where the Socialist party’s headquarters situated] that they thought Stephen was their figure. Koppány represented a failed figure of the Imre Nagy kind, who made the wrong decision in a given historical situation. This expectation on their part almost had the reverse effect, because the public did understand the essence of the conflict”.<sup>16</sup> It can then be regarded as natural that within the Hungarian

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.jbsz.hu/interjuk/regmult-/463-istvan-a-kiraly-koppany-a-szupersztar.html>  
Accessed on 1 October 2015.

<sup>15</sup> SEBŐK 2002. 366.

<sup>16</sup> SEBŐK 2002. 366.

Socialist Workers' Party too the hidden message was decoded<sup>17</sup> as a conflict between Stephen – Koppány and Kádár – Imre Nagy.<sup>18</sup>

Naturally, *Stephen the King* cannot be held responsible for every reinterpretation of the historical figure of Saint Stephen. Its significance can be seen much more in the role the mass media had on popular culture: it strengthened opinions appearing in everyday culture and common talk, stirring them up and contributing to their spread. It is not possible to produce figures verifying the claim that the rock opera contributed to forming a positive image of Koppány, but the millions of LPs sold and the numbers who saw the film can be regarded as indirect evidence of such a connection. While it cannot be used to support arguments, it is worth mentioning a round-table discussion held at the time that touched on the question. The director's assistant Mihály Sárdi asked:

“who do we like better in this play, Stephen or Koppány? And if a 14-year-old child sees Saint Stephen for the first time in his life in this play will he really like him?”

The director Gábor Koltay, and even Béla Balás a Catholic priest quite clearly named Koppány:

“We watched the performance with a whole lot of small Christian groups, and their first response was that Koppány was better than Stephen.”<sup>19</sup>

However, the emergence of an image of Stephen radically different from the view(s) of academic historians must be sought not in the rock opera, or even in national political factors during the period of communism and then of socialism. The pseudo-scientific trend that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whose representatives

17 SEBŐK 2002. 367: “One group spoke of an unwanted nationalist breakthrough, especially in connection with the giant national flag unfurled in the finale, the national anthem and the fireworks. According to the other group the work was an unequivocal stand in support of János Kádár. King Stephen the reformer was prepared to condone cruelty and executions, he called in foreigners, that is, he used violence to realise the national aspirations. The work could therefore also be seen as confirming Kádár's interpretation of 1956. According to a third view, Koppány (played by the rock singer Gyula Viki) was the best figure, his role was the strongest musically. While it is true that the course of history demands the victory of King Stephen, artistically and aesthetically it is Koppány who is victorious, in this way the piece can be seen as confirming Imre Nagy. Stephen's victory is false, and they added, he even implemented certain things from Koppány's aspirations. In addition, as Péter Agárdi pointed out, a fourth interpretation could also be felt, especially in 1984-85, when parallel with the steadily strengthening opposition movement, a growing struggle began within the party over Kádár's succession. It could be felt that Imre Pozsgay was trying to radicalise the party with reforms, while others on the contrary demanded a stronger, stricter leadership (perhaps with a younger face), and beside these two main trends there was also another distinctive trend, »popular-national leftism«, whose members actually would have liked a milder form of national communism. And for whom Stephen the King also provided an occasion for self-celebration.” Béla Szilárd Jávorszky <http://www.jbsz.hu/interjuk/regmult/463-istvan-a-kiraly-koppany-a-szupersztar.html>

18 Imre NAGY (1896-1958) the martyred prime minister of the 1956 revolution and freedom struggle, who was condemned to death during the time of János Kádár.

19 KOLTAY 1984. 125-126.



were famously called “prehistoric oddballs” by Miklós Zsirai, did not focus its attention exclusively on the topic of origin, but taking it as a point of departure reinterpreted practically every (real or imagined) major event and figure in Hungarian history.<sup>20</sup> As a consequence, it became inevitable that vital turning points in history about which our knowledge is incomplete – making them more susceptible to mythologisation – such as the Magyar Conquest<sup>21</sup> or the figures at the time of the foundation of the state became the subjects of (re)constructed historical myths. After 1945 these myths flourished mainly among the Hungarians in emigration, but from the 1960s they gradually began to trickle into the mother country,<sup>22</sup> then following the liberalisation of book publishing and the spread of the internet, they reached the unprecedented richness and popularity that we see today.<sup>23</sup>

In connection with Saint Stephen remythologisation is present with special intensity, in a way that is full of internal tensions and can be linked to current political processes. Half humorously, Voigt wrote of pseudo-scholars who gave free flight to their imagination, one of whose sources was the work of Adorján Magyar (1887-1978) whose writings – says Voigt

“are not even the worst in this direction. There is nothing historical about them, at the most the fact that the authors hate not only the Finno-Ugrian peoples and Saint Stephen who converted to the Christian faith, but sooner or later everyone who, say, is not Sumerian [...] There is no refuge here for fact-based historiography. Saint Stephen appears mainly as the persecutor of the authentic Hungarian *regösök*, shamans, compared to whom the heathen Koppány would have been a better »alternative«.”<sup>24</sup>

Viewed superficially such a conclusion could even seem true, but on closer examination we find a more complex picture of how the ideologies described as illusory, dilettante, pseudo-scientific have seeped into the public conscience.

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20 On this topic, among others, see BALI 2014; POVEDÁK 2015.

21 SZABADOS 2015.

22 KOMORÓCZY 1976.

23 MIKOS 2013. 204. Various disciplines responded to the phenomenon in studies of varying intensity. It is not possible here to discuss them. For further information see, among others: KOMORÓCZY 1976; SÁNDOR 2011; HONTI 2010; HUBBES – POVEDÁK 2015; KEMÉNYFI 2006; MIKOS 2013; POVEDÁK – SZILÁRDI 2014; SZILÁGYI – SZILÁRDI 2007.

24 VOIGT 2004. 295.

## The remythologisation of Saint Stephen

Just as at the time it was not the rendering of historical justice that was regarded as the most significant among the effects of the rock opera *Stephen the King*, in the same way it is not principally academic historiography that is affected by the contemporary reinterpretations, but the lived national self-awareness. The opinion of Vitányi in 1984 – “I would not regard it as fitting to expect an opera to resolve the debated questions in our view of history.”<sup>25</sup> – is also valid for these theories, and we can state that among the political, cultural and religious trends of the present time there is a group of growing size, a subculture that is spreading in all respects and has increasing social/cultural influence that defines its national identity not on the basis of the “official”, “academic” canons, but in many cases in opposition to them and reinterpreting them.<sup>26</sup> The question arises in this connection: what happens when this mass ideology being shaped at the grassroots level reaches the official level and appears in politics and then, in turn, in public education? What contribution can this basically excluding attitude, in many cases tinged with chauvinism, make to shaping national identity? The answer to this rhetorical question points beyond the competence of the folklorist and cultural anthropologist.

The reinterpretation of Saint Stephen has been present in pseudo-science for a long while – and obviously also among those who read such writings – but it was only in connection with the debates surrounding the revival for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rock opera that it reached wider public opinion. The play under the title of *I.K. 3.0.* was directed by Róbert Alföldi<sup>27</sup>, and after the premieres in Szeged then Budapest and its broadcast on television, the debates on the topic shaped cultural public discourse for a considerable time. Although the reviews appearing in periodicals, on various websites and blogs basically criticised the director’s conception, or less often praised it, quite separately from them a mass reaction arose, based mainly not on aesthetics but on ideology. The process reached its peak in a demonstration mobilising a few hundred people held at the time of the Budapest premiere.<sup>28</sup> Although the demonstrators officially gathered because of the director’s conception that presented a negative view of the Catholic church, to a great extent the real motivations were different and far more complex. Although

<sup>25</sup> KOLTAY 1984. 100.

<sup>26</sup> For the most comprehensive syntheses to date of this phenomenon being constructed from below, see: FEISCHMIDT et al. (eds.) 2014, POVEDÁK – SZILÁRDI (eds.) 2014; and SÁNDOR 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Róbert Alföldi (1967-) actor, talk show host, director. He was director of the National Theatre from 2008 to 2013. He openly acknowledges his sexual otherness and his liberal political views.

<sup>28</sup> During the concert given in the Budapest Aréna a demonstration was organised by mainly radical right-wing groups hostile to the director’s conception, such as the Guardians of the Carpathian Homeland Movement, the Hungarian National Guard, the Hungarian Self-defence for a Better Future and the National-spirited Bikers. On the course of the demonstration, see: <http://mno.hu/grund/istvan-a-kiraly-tunteteseke-unalom-1181472>

a number of commenters attacked the director for his ideas that were contrary to the original meaning of the play, it can be said that it was certainly not the artistic principles or aesthetic objections that brought people out onto the street or launched a wave of mass indignation online. Indeed, the comments that appeared show that it was not even the slur on Christianity that evoked the reactions.

An examination the forums dealing with Saint Stephen on websites associated with the alternative view of history reveals that the commenters with an interest in history but in many cases having very superficial knowledge, basically criticise the historical figure of Saint Stephen and reinterpret it from four angles.

1. The anti-Christian opinions complain about the forced spread of a religion foreign to ancient Hungarian traditions that they regard as ideological colonisation.

"[...] it was not only unjustified morally and ideologically to 'import' the Catholic religion that was in moral crisis, but also entirely unnecessary."

"The steadfast Scythian Magyars opposed the foreign occupation called Christianity: the leaders and tribal chieftains because of their loss of power, the *táltosok* because of their loss of influence."

"The conversion, that is, the christening generally happened under orders and on a mass scale. Those who refused were slaughtered cruelly by the method that had already been tested in the west. If "necessary" they executed whole villages. The *táltosok*, the priests of the Scythian religion (the practitioners of culture and its doctors) were sent to the stake as witches, or were buried alive with their wives, as happened with the chief shaman Thonuzoba."

"The popes in Rome have always been aware that the ancient Hungarian religion is the basis of all other faiths and they began to fear "in the name of God" for the well organised and functioning world empire that spread and taught distorted, misinterpreted, simplified, satanic ideals. They knew that the Hungarians were the guardians of the true faith and at any time could have unveil the church that proclaimed satanic teachings and aimed for domination. This is why the priests needed someone they could direct as they wished, but who at the same time appeared to represent the interests of the Hungarian people. That person was Stephen (Vajk), son of Prince Géza, who rose to the throne through betrayal and murder, with German bayonets and Roman gold, then consolidated his ill-gotten power with bloody reprisals (genocide)."

"The whole of Christianity is a dirty Jewish sect... Dirty Stephen was one of the servants of that Satanist nightmare. Peter the first pope was also crucified upside down."

2. Some of the comments reinterpret Christianity itself, making a distinction between the “original”, “true”, “Hungarian/Scythian” Christianity and the “falsified” “Judeo-Christianity” operating under the direction of the Roman pope. However, this kind of anti-Christian attitude strongly reflects the ideology of anti-Semitism as in the majority of cases we can find in it threads of a conspiracy theory in which the teachings of the “Christianity of Jesus” were “falsified by the rabbi Saul”, and as a consequence the entire Christianity as it exists today is the result of “Jewish scheming”. In addition, the notion of an anti-Hungarian Jewish conspiracy runs through this version of history.

“[...] the forced imposition of Jewish Christianity against the will of the Hungarian people is a historical fact.”

“What kind of ruler is that who saddles the people with priests who don’t even speak Hungarian, who preach the Jewish God in Latin! Who praise the people of David and tell stories of saints who have nothing to do with the Hungarian people! Our saints are Emese and Álmos, not the Virgin Mary and Jesus! Our heroes are not Moses, David and Solomon, but Árpád, Lehel and Botond! Until we embrace that, we will be nothing but servants of the Jews!”

“[...] he prevented his people from continuing to follow the Divine Guidance, the teaching on natural human life, that is Christianity, rejecting its Judaisation.”

“Two religious ideas: that of Saul and that of Peter, two mentalities: the neo-barbarian West and the ancient, authentic, Jesus-based Scythian-Hungarian clashed then in the Carpathian Basin.”

“Now the Jews regard themselves as God’s people. We could call Budapest Judapest, etc. The work of Stephen I must be evaluated in the light of this fact, they should not spit on the *táltosok*; in the past it was in many people’s interest to give them a bad reputation.”

3. In the majority of cases the notion of “Scythian/Hungarian Christianity” indicates a religious phenomenon of bricolage that simultaneously syncretises Christian teachings and traditions with pre-Christian elements of the *táltos* belief, shamanism.<sup>29</sup> Opinions reflecting the resulting Neopagan or ethno-pagan religious construct are thus not merely anti-Christian, they also indicate the existence of a new, constructed religious orientation.

“[...] we became a new “European” kingdom, that was no longer headed by the grand duke Vajk who followed the Scythian religion and had dedicated himself to the God of the Hungarians.”

“[...] the Hun-Magyar people were robbed of the Scythian religion of their ancestors that had always been victorious. The new order

29 PÓVEDÁK 2014.

killed/ordered the killing of the learned *táltosok*, and at the same time banned the ancient culture, that is, the Hun-Székely runes."

"Today we would say that the child Stephen had been successfully brainwashed. And Stephen tore the Hungarian people away from their eastern roots, he destroyed the original archaic religion and the ancient knowledge."

"Gábor Pap wrote somewhere that Stephen wrote a letter to the pope, seeking his advice. The pope wrote back to him saying that he should do whatever he thinks best, as Stephen carried on the blood-line of Jesus, while he, the pope, was only a vicar. He found the original letter and published it." (12.10.2015)

"Anyone who underestimates the Hungarians and regards them as Christian knows nothing of our ancient *táltos* and *mágus* traditions and nature:) That is what the Hungarians are proud of, not of the betrayal committed by King Stephen, but of the ancient Turul origin! Of the tradition of the Sun God. Of Sumerian sciences!"

4. However, what lies behind all the opinions is neo-nationalist indignation arising from a violation of national identity, that is at the same time the main source of motivation of the following three categories.

"[...] Saint Stephen I, who no longer ruled the country with the trust of the Hungarians. He had become the loyal Christian king of the west with the support of the German emperor, consecrated by the pope's emissary and rewarded with the "crown of Sylvester" ..."

"[...] Then the 'fine foreign' command became the new law, that is, serve it and the lie that: 'A people with only one language is weak and feeble', so you must allow all foreigners in."

"[...] I think it was not at all by chance that the experienced bishop Astrid took Vajk-Stephen "under his wing" and we are right in assuming that in reality he ruled Hungary. His activity was naturally directed at winning the favour of the two "great friends", the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor."

"It is well known that Stephen was far from being a holy man... He brought German soldiers into the Hungarian land and rose to power with their help. Not only did the soldiers massacre Hungarians, they also imposed a foreign religion in place of the ancient Hungarian religion."

"Vajk was the first Bolshevik in Hungarian history (in the spirit of "totally wiping out the past..."). With his totalitarian brain he wanted to wipe the slate clean. This "holy" king handed over the Vienna basin to his Bavarian brothers-in-law, like a wedding gift for the alliance through Gizella. Wasn't it rather Vajk who abandoned his religion, who not only rejected the faith of his ancestors and the

Blood Treaty, but also made it his life's aim to eradicate the entire Hungarian culture? When Vajk came to power in 997 it created an entirely new situation. He operated in Hungary like, say, Rákosi after 1945. He spread a foreign ideology by force, with foreign help. He came to power unlawfully."

"Koppány was a patriot, Stephen was a traitor who served foreign interests! He made Germans all the big landowners, raising them above the Hungarian subjects."

"And we must not forget that Saint Stephen wiped out half the Hungarian people in the name and interest of Christianity. There would almost certainly have been an alternative..."

"Stephen, who hardly spoke Hungarian at all, physically deformed – with six fingers [...] Koppány the grand duke, follower and defender of the "Old Faith" (the religion of love) ..."

"He put an end to the Hungary based on general freedom – breaking the continuity of following the Divine Guidance (Constitution), and created a Hungary of Stephen, as a kingdom living according to foreign interests, unacceptable to the Hungarian Soul."

"[...] the truth is that because of the deeds of Saint Stephen we cannot speak of an independent Hungarian nation ...by asserting foreign interests he isolated himself from the people, divided the united Hungarian nation composed of free Hungarians into chosen supporters of Istvan – exercising the right of licence – and the supporters of Koppány who were forced to live in exclusion in their homeland. In betrayal of our ancient traditions, he was raised to the throne by force by those who had made his father their governor, with this he denied his country and forced the people to disintegrate."

"[...] he merged Hungary into the western civilisation that is now becoming unviable after death agonies that lasted 1100 years."<sup>30</sup>

The emotionally charged wave of indignation that appeared clearly shows that the work itself has become canonised over the decades and is closely intertwined with the lived national consciousness. From that point on, versions of the play – of which there have been countless numbers since the first performance – cannot be regarded as simply successful or less successful expressions of artistic freedom,

30 The sources of the quotations are the following websites. There are countless other sites on similar topics with similar comments. <http://magyarmegmaradasert.hu/kozerdeku/figyelemre-melto/item/3857-nemzeti-m%C3%A9leg-avagy-mi-is-volna-a-tur%C3%A1ni-%C3%A1tok>  
<http://magyarmegmaradasert.hu/kiletunk/tortenelmunk/item/2620/vajkahitehagyott>  
[http://tudatraebresztes.blog.hu/2011/10/20/turani\\_atok\\_1](http://tudatraebresztes.blog.hu/2011/10/20/turani_atok_1)  
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<http://monarchista.blogspot.com/2009/09/ujpoganyasag-ellen-keresztényseg-mellett.html>  
<http://aranylaci.freeweb.hu/sabrag/15-%20koppany.htm>



rather they are reinterpretations of now almost sacralised expression of national consciousness. In this way, conceptions that break down and fundamentally reinterpret the canonised version are manifested among the masses as violations of national consciousness. All this indignation is naturally also strengthened by the nostalgia felt for the 1980s when the piece became a symbol of Hungarian national consciousness that had survived even among the hostile circumstances of socialism. However it must be stressed that all of the categories can be found to varying degrees in the majority of opinions. It happens more than once that a comment is at once anti-Semitic and opposed to globalisation and Christianity, that is, it defines itself and its own nationalism principally by dissociating itself from other ideologies and trends. Other characteristics of this dichotomous attitude are the inability to compromise, and stereotypical thinking.

### Summing up

Saint Stephen is one of the Hungarian historical heroes whose cult has visibly come to new life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A complete mythology, constructed according to the rules of folklore, has arisen around his figure; analysis of this mythology reveals the functioning of vernacular historical memory. It clearly shows that history is continuously written and reinterpreted over the course of time and not only historical events appear in a new light and acquire new meaning content, so do historical heroes, because the vernacular view of history basically focuses on persons.

In the case of individual historical heroes this kind of reinterpretation results in fundamental modifications, often acquiring a sense exactly the opposite of the original meaning.<sup>31</sup> These processes are not unique to post-modernity, they have been present throughout history.<sup>32</sup> But whereas in earlier periods the reinterpretation of historical heroes, the preference for certain figures over others basically began in high culture, academic scholarship or politics, in our time this process of reinterpretation is coming largely from below, as a grassroots movement. As a consequence, changes in social consciousness and national identity can be understood through such processes. The reinterpretation of Saint Stephen also reveals how much the historical judgement, the meaning and significance of his figure in popular culture has changed over the past three decades. We can understand through it that while in the last decade of socialism it was as a symbolic figure of the preservation of (Christian) Hungarian consciousness in face of the regime that the cult of Saint Stephen gained new impetus, by the turn of the century

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31 Anttonen showed that this kind of partial reinterpretation can even result on the emergence of several conflicting discourses making it possible to use the cult of the saints concerned for secular as well as religious purposes. This could be observed for example during the time of Finnish nation-building, when the figure of Bishop Henrik began to appear as a symbol of Finnish nationalism. ANTTONEN 2004; 2012.

32 POVEDÁK 2011a.

under the influence of neo-nationalism it underwent deheroisation resulting in reinterpretation. This reveals how hero construction/deconstruction thinks in absolute categories, the figures are purely good or bad, without any transition, that is, like the world-view of folk tales, it places the individual figures – who helped or harmed the Hungarians – on its palette on the basis of binary opposites. In addition, it is also obvious that the reinterpreted cult of Saint Stephen throws light not only on national identity but also on certain processes of vernacular religion – particularly Christian-Neopagan syncretism<sup>33</sup>. It shows that in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the strict borderline that arose in Hungary between religious culture and profane culture seems to be blurred in the neo-nationalist subculture. Certain elements of religious culture (not only Saint Stephen but also, among others, Saint Eusebius,<sup>34</sup> the Holy Crown, the double cross<sup>35</sup>) are being activated as part of the profane culture, but not in the same way as could be observed before the “secularisation”. It is not a question of blurring of the border between the sacred and the profane: elements containing symbolic meaning originally belonging only to the “sacred” are gaining transcendent features and judgement, and being resacralised within neo-nationalism.

Of course, this kind of reinterpretation brings results not only for folklore and religious studies. Beyond the fact that the operating characteristics of the new myths that are appearing can be analysed mainly with the tools of folkloristics, the broader phenomenon itself has much more complex implications. The new myths constructed on the basis of incomplete knowledge also become the founding myths of neo-nationalism,<sup>36</sup> and as more or less false histories in themselves, they bring about heroes of the same kind. However, it is an inherent danger of an ideology based on false heroes that it will not be able to formulate an adequate response to the demand for clarification and certification coming from the opposite side, that is, it cannot prove the soundness of its own ideology with the objective and authentic methods of scholarship. This leaves two possible defence responses: to counter by ignoring the arguments of the other side or to create conspiracy theories supporting its own views and at the same time implying an attack on the nation behind the arguments of the other side. However, whichever option it takes strengthens its excluding attitude and, finding itself in a Catch 22 situation, it adopts an increasingly aggressive countering mechanism and becomes an ever more self-isolated “counter-science”.

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33 POVEDÁK 2014.

34 POVEDÁK 2015.

35 POVEDÁK 2011b.

36 The presence of neo-nationalism in popular culture is shown by FEISCHMIDT et al. (eds.) 2014.

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## “WHAT DOES GOD SAY THAT I SHOULD BE?”

### MUSLIM INTELLECTUALS IN EUROPE AND THE IMAGINED “MUSLIM IDENTITY”

**Abstract:** The narrative of “Muslim identity” is fast becoming a key problem in Europe. The narrative, sustained by Islamic governments, movements and intellectuals, blocks the way of “European Muslims” toward modern subjectivity and citizenship. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of literature and initiatives by critical Muslim intellectuals that challenge the narrative of “Muslim identity”. This paper offers philosophical-anthropological insights into the problem of “Muslim identity” in Europe through the cases of four Muslim intellectuals: T. Ramadan, M. Chebel, F. Benslama and L. Babès.

**Keywords:** Identity, Muslim intellectuals in Europe, modern subjectivity, alterity, T. Ramadan, M. Chebel, F. Benslama, L. Babès.

“What Does God Say that I Should Be?”<sup>1</sup> This question is not part of a Muslim theological manual. It was asked by Tariq Ramadan, one of the leading Muslim intellectuals in Europe while lecturing about “Muslim identity”. When I put this question in front of my students, many of them were suspicious of the validity of the question. Some of them think that the answer is evident: God wants Muslims to be believers (a tautology in this case) which renders Ramadan’s question rhetorical. There is a point to this answer as Ramadan claims that God wants something specific from „Muslims” in Europe and that Ramadan knows the answer. Others think that Muslims’ identities depend on their own choices (free will) and, therefore, God does not meddle in this matter. There is, however, a much more serious paradox to Ramadan’s question: imagining a “Muslim identity” in Europe whereby the authority of God is needed to warrant Muslimness. Theology is used to support a political anthropology, although, in Ramadan’s perception, nothing separates the realms of God and that of human beings.

As we speak today, the notion of “Muslim identity” in Europe is rarely contested. “Muslims” accepted to be identified as such and non-Muslims are satisfied with the designation of a whole range of populations as Muslims. Most participants in the public sphere seem to agree that “these people are Muslims” and they cannot help it anyway. It is what they *are* and Europe should cope with it.

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: belhaj.abdessamad@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> RAMADAN 1999.



That being the case, the history of “these populations” urges us to criticize the narrative of “Muslim identity”. As immigrants stepped into Europe from Africa and Asia in the fifties and sixties, they were not treated as “Muslims”, but as “invited workers”. Social identity defined what they were: Cheap male workers whose ethnic, cultural or religious stock was irrelevant. However, as the descendants of these workers were born in Europe, but not Europeans nor “imported workers”, they became for a while identity-less, until the “Muslim identity” came by the end of the eighties to fill the gap. A vicious identity circle came into existence and the shift from social to religious identity transformed entirely the nature of the problem. Both „Muslims” and “non-Muslims” accepted the conversion of the problem into a “Muslim problem”. The process is indeed complex. Political actors used a phenomenon they observed in the „descendants of immigrants”, namely an islamisation since the seventies, led by exiled Islamists and agents of different “Muslim countries”, to justify a discursive and political machine the dynamic of which is to bog down a problem of immigration, citizenship and integration.

It is argued here that the narrative of “Muslim identity” is a simulacrum (Jean Baudrillard) of a discursive tradition (Talal Asad). Muslim states and Islamic movements quickly created an Islamic political imaginary<sup>2</sup> for workers and their descendants. This imaginary has been entertained since the veil debate and Salman Rushdie’s affair in 1989. Muslim Ideologues crafted a series of myths to sustain „Muslimness”: Palestine, the narrative of injustice, the Muslim community, the conspiracy of media, Andalusia, the veil and other symbols, “our identity”, the halal food, Islamic finance, etc.

The narrative of “Muslim identity”, always expressed in the third person,<sup>3</sup> hides the subjectivity of every subject who is an immigrant worker or a descendent of immigration. It refers to an “original Muslim identity” that never was. Nationals from Turkey and Morocco do not define themselves as Muslims in terms of their identity, but as Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Moroccans, Amazigh, etc. One cannot belong to “an identity” that does not exist.<sup>4</sup> That is why it is a simulacrum. Furthermore, the first generation of immigrants was cut from Islam as a discursive tradition. The second generation, under the influence of religious policies of “Muslim states” and Islamic movements, connected with a discursive tradition they found dignifying, burying themselves in a de-subjectifying imagined identity.

The “Muslim” subject is yet to fully claim reflexivity and active citizenship in European societies. It is the case that many immigrant workers or their descendants consider themselves citizens and act as such. However, the dominating trend of Islamic intellectuals and activists continuously enhances the narrative of “Muslim identity”. In the following, I suggest a philosophical-anthropological inquiry into the problem of “Muslim identity” in Europe through four voices: T. Ramadan, an advocate of the narrative of “Muslim identity”, and three secular

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2 WERBNER 1998. 11-31.

3 TAN 2008. 31-49.

4 SHIVELY 2006. 537-542. This does not exclude religion from being a component of identity.

Muslim intellectuals who criticize this narrative and rebuild the “Muslim” subject as citizen (M. Chebel, F. Benslama and L. Babès). While Ramadan has been the subject of dozens of studies, this paper offers the first scholarly study on Chebel<sup>5</sup>, Benslama and Babès.<sup>6</sup>

## Tariq Ramadan and the imagined “Muslim identity”

T. Ramadan (Born in 1962) is a Swiss intellectual of Egyptian origin who is particularly active in France, Qatar and the UK. He studied philosophy and French literature, and obtained a PhD in Islamic studies at the University of Geneva. He completed his academic studies with a brief training at Al-Azhar between 1992-1993 then 1994-1995. Although he negates having organisational links to the Muslim Brotherhood, he still claims the intellectual heritage of Ḥasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. He is also under the heavy influence of other Islamic ideologues.

T. Ramadan formulates the question of “Muslim identity” as follows:

“We are entitled to our values and our identity [...] the law manages specific and shared values”.<sup>7</sup>

This statement implies a series of understatements. To begin with, it entails that there is a “universal Muslim identity” that adapts to the local context, and in this case, the European context. While this might be tempting for some Muslims to imagine such identity, going so far as to call it an *umma*, it is a religious ideal, not a reality. An Indonesian and a Qatari do not share a Muslim identity. They share a religion, but their identities are composed of different ethnic, social and cultural elements that radically separate them, the same way a Christian from Texas does not share the same identity with a Christian from Kenya.<sup>8</sup>

T. Ramadan, like most Muslim thinkers today, attempts to resolve the problem of this “unidentified Muslim identity”, by using the vague expression of “the principles of Muslim identity”, meaning the foundational texts, beliefs and practices required by God and his Prophet.<sup>9</sup> These are the guiding lines of such

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5 Ruth Mas dedicated a study to Chebel’s secular views of love, but not as a Muslim intellectual: MAS 2004. 273-301.

6 Franck Fregosi offers a useful, although general description of the field of Muslim intellectuals in France in: FREGOSI 2008. 93-115.

7 RAMADAN 2008.

8 In his study of Muslims in Mumbai, Ari Singh Anand shows that „the ostensibly ‘religious’ domain of Islam is not necessarily the only, or even primary, basis for achieving a self-consciously ethical selfhood for even those who identify as observant and devout Muslims [...] the religious domain of Islam in this context is defined as such and intersected by discourses and practices of the self as a political and economic agent defined largely in terms of political modernity”. ANAND 2014. 377-398.

9 RAMADAN 2008.

identity. A modern reader, embedded with the ethical sense of the word principles, could think of a principle such as human dignity. It is not the case in Ramadan's use of the word principle which has here a religious sense, that of concrete regulations of Islamic law and belief. There are two additional problems with "the principles of Muslim identity". On the one hand, they are not the same for a Salafi, a Muslim Brother, a Shī'ī, or secular Muslims. On the other, "these principles" are but the tenets of Islamic law which cannot be sustained in the modern world, let alone in European societies. "These principles" lead simply to the disintegration of modern societies. Ramadan's vocabulary might be misleading. The use of terms such as principles, spirituality, and intelligence to find "shared meaning" between Muslims and non-Muslims is ambiguous. These terms bear a different content whether we think within a post-secular perspective (the case of Christianity) or pre-secular (the case of Islam). It would be naïve and erroneous to consider the use of these terms as equivalent.

Let us examine further the term principle. Ramadan employs it, on the one side, to convey the reformist meaning of return to the foundations, which involves the by-passing of centuries of Islamic legacy. He sees the Islamic civilisation in two versions: one common and the other specific. As he puts it: "The great Islamic civilization and its specificities: Persian, African, Arab or western. While there are superior common features, there are also distinctions in culture and language and peculiarities at the level of nations".<sup>10</sup> Universal Muslim identity emerges in the making, or rather, in the de-making of these foundations. Is it possible to go to the foundations without the whole Muslim tradition? Hermeneutically, it is a vicious circle and impossible to achieve. For the link to the principles is only possible through history and language, and we understand both at the point where we are because they reached us with a certain meaning they assigned to the foundations. On the other side, he means by principle that which is immutable. This includes values and beliefs that cannot be conceded to any other culture or society, and which are rooted in the foundations. They are the core of what a Muslim is. Ramadan's fundamentalist vicious circle is full: whether from today (identity) or from the past (principles), Muslims are "condemned" to their "origins".

Ramadan believes that law is different from values and the national identity of a modern state. This error of thought might come from two reasons: T. Ramadan's 20<sup>th</sup> century Islamic ideology which is very suspicious of law and the state, seeing positive law as illegitimate, or at least as "technical". Only Islamic law is absolute, and therefore expresses, presumably, the "Muslim values" and "identity". In a secular world, law does not support the religious specificities of communities; it regulates and protects the rights of the citizens, including religious rights, but does not support "religious identities".

Additionally, there cannot be a constructive community that upholds its own values while it shares at the same time other values with the rest of the society. Common values are formed by social institutions and secular policies over time, and by way of interactions between individuals. So, Muslims ought to be secular

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<sup>10</sup> RAMADAN 2009. 265.

in order to live and participate in European societies. Certainly, these values cannot be claims. For if they exist, they cannot be claimed and if they do not exist, they cannot be invented. At any rate, a claim within a given society is only receivable inasmuch as it is formulated in the terms defined by this society, its values and laws.

T. Ramadan usually uses the phrase “common values”, referring to values Muslims and non-Muslims share such as freedom. He divides people on the basis of religion while the road to these “common values” was secular and historical. Individuals cherish freedom, not as Muslims or Christians, but as modern subjects. For Ramadan, values should emerge from the two books: the book of revelation and the book of nature.<sup>11</sup> It is evident that non-Muslims, conceded that such identification is possible in a modern world, cannot accept to share any values with Muslims that are based on a book of revelation. Modernity has introduced differentiation as a major mechanism of knowledge and organisation. Truth is what humans can verify and nobody can judge the truth of the book of revelation. Besides, no single truth could be found in the intersection of the book of revelation and the book of nature. All that could be meaningful if “Muslims” generate one reading of this “one book” of revelation (which is not true considering the differences in both corpuses and interpretations of Muslim traditions). Since the “one truth” is non-verifiable and non-existent, from any stance we take, it cannot be a truth.

## Malek Chebel and the quest of the subject in Islam

Born (in 1953) and raised in Algeria, M. Chebel immigrated to France in the seventies as a student. He got his PhD in clinical psychopathology and psychoanalysis at the University Paris 7 (1980), a second doctorate in anthropology, ethnology and religious studies at Jussieu (1982) and a third PhD degree in political science at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris (1984). As a public intellectual, he engages, particularly, in the debates on *islam des Lumières*, the body and the subject in Islam.

Chebel addresses the question of identity as a problem of subjectivity in Islam. He asks a double question:

„Is Islam able to establish an identity without the latter being confronted with otherness, and amended by it, enriched? Which sources and which events will produce self-image, and therefore the image of the other?“<sup>12</sup>

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11 RAMADAN 2008, 169.

12 CHEBEL 2002, 127.

The answer to the second question comes from his *islam des Lumières*. In 2004, he suggested 27 ideas to reform Islam: Respect of the other, freedom of thought and consciousness, pre-eminence of the individual over the community, humanism, pre-eminence of reason over any other form of thought and belief, etc.<sup>13</sup> Chebel refers to a different Islamic repertoire than Ramadan's. He turns to Islam as a civilisation, with its achievements in Muslim philosophy, popular religion, literature, especially literature of pleasure, rational theology and Sufism. In other words, he endorses the interpretations of Islam that are post-foundational and non-orthodox, the function of which, for him, is to free Muslims from orthodoxy, the guardian of the foundations.

To the first question, Chebel answers that „Islam does not favor the emergence of an autonomous subject escaping religious imprint”.<sup>14</sup> There is, however, hope for secularized Muslims, to emerge as modern subjects:

“There remains to the Muslim the possibility to turn from a *being-within-the-realm of God* to the social and political individual and acquire an interactive citizenship in the *Umma*. But to properly reinvest Socius without leaving its faith, the being-of-belief must first undock the close link that binds it to the institution of the mosque, as well as granted the impressive prerogatives to it [...] the birth of the Muslim citizenship has this as a price: turning its back to the mosque without removing God from its vital horizon.”<sup>15</sup>

In Chebel's mind, there is a link between space and identity. Disconnecting the individual from spaces governed by Islamic law, foundational to “Muslim identity”, is, thus, a first step towards a modern subject in Islam. It takes the opposite strategy of the promoters of “Muslim identity” in Europe who unceasingly build mosques. After all, secularisation is about separating spaces, which is necessary to any modernisation process. This is the first step. Modernisation and the emergence of the subject have to address two additional challenges: those of thought and action if one might isolate them as categories. As a mode of thought, Islam discourages autonomy of the self with regard to traditions. Thought should *be principled*. Social and political structures, which are traditional or semi-traditional, hurdle further the liberation of the subject. Despite all modern techniques, the state in Islam acts as a commander of the believers:

„The Muslim subject exists today in an area that the Muslim ‘moral clergy’ still held in awe, at the same time causing a critical reading of its realization in the concrete world. The paradox remains unresolved: one cannot in Islam today become a subject of action and reaction, an autonomous subject of movement without

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<sup>13</sup> CHEBEL 2004.

<sup>14</sup> CHEBEL 2002. 127.

<sup>15</sup> CHEBEL 2002. 269-270.

the intercession of the „state manager” itself not yet completely free from the mosque. At the outset, Islam amalgamated the contingency of the human being with its projection in an afterlife far more rewarding.”<sup>16</sup>

Chebel takes the opposite standpoint of T. Ramadan. He successfully and rightly shifts the focus from the texts to the subject, from an ethical-juristic perspective to anthropological-philosophical-psychological one. There is a long way to go from the current status where solution is seen outside the humans to the emergence of a modern subject, and therefore, of conditions in which identity actively functions as a process:

“After the critical phase of identifying with the model of ancestors, considered to be ideal and perfectly reconstructed in so many aspects, Muslims will have to display their determination vis-à-vis the many choices available to them. For the true post-oedipal bifurcation lies here: how can they now accept themselves without turning their backs on modernity? how can they access modernity – and which one? – Without turning their backs on their faith? This double challenge of earning modernity without losing faith is central to their contemporary history unless they are reluctant to cut the Gordian knot.”<sup>17</sup>

Some anthropologists would disagree with Chebel. For example, Saba Mahmood, inspired by Talal Asad, argues for „uncoupling the notion of agency from that of resistance as a necessary step in thinking about forms of desire and politics that do not accord with norms of secular-liberal feminism and its liberatory telos”.<sup>18</sup> In other words, a modern subject might emerge in Islam without the secular-liberal norms. Mahmoud’s thesis has its own flaws. Suffice it here to underline one major shortcoming; Mahmoud engages the debate on the subject from a post-feminist and post-modern perspective. That is to say, she acknowledges different forms of subjectivity as equally valid. Women in Egypt, her field of study, live a pre-secular and modern daily life, under the pressure of patriarchal religious and social order. They aspire to modernity, but cannot have access to it, and turn to different modes of negotiation with the pre-modern world. A modern subject cannot emerge without traditional or semi-traditional norms.

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16 CHEBEL 2002. 283.

Recently, Kabir reminded us of the dogmatic character of the state in Turkey, the only secular state in the Muslim world. As he puts it, “departures from otherwise salient norms do not of necessity challenge the dominant forms of reflexivity. More often, they place at risk the coherence of the deviating utterance or act itself”. TAMBAR 2012. 669.

17 CHEBEL 2002. 285.

18 MAHMOUD 2006. 31.

## Fethi Benslama

In 1972, Benslama (born in 1951) emigrated from Tunisia to France as a student. He studied psychopathology at the prestigious Paris 7 and anthropology at the EHESS. He got a PhD in psychology in Paris 13 (1999). His family in Tunisia has deep interest in the Islamic legacy, and particularly in the interpretation of dreams. Raja Benslama, his sister is also a psychoanalyst, and scholar of Muslim traditions and Arabic literature. F. Benslama has contributed much to the debates on psychoanalysis and Islam. His two projects: *Le manifeste des libertés* and *raison et déraison en islam* have attracted the interest and the support of a multitude of intellectuals in France and Belgium.

Benslama uses Islamic mysticism and tools of psychoanalysis in the study of Islam as a religion and a political system. He is influenced by Jacques Lacan, Freud, Ibn 'Arabī, Avicenne, Averroès and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭāhā. Despite a somewhat similar curriculum to that of Chebel, their approaches are quite different. Chebel combines anthropology and history, with a clear historical imprint, which makes him an *islamologue* in the eyes of the media. On the other hand, psychoanalysis dominates Benslama's analysis. He focuses primarily on the collective delirium of the return to origins that led to the attempt to return and clone the "original" Islam by force, leading to accuse most Muslims today of disbelief. To explain radicalism, he resorts to the notion of despair of the masses. It is this despair that in his view explains the narrative of "Muslim identity".

Benslama believes that primary identities and affiliations [family, clan, religion, region, etc.] should be virtually destroyed, not to be altogether eliminated, but rebuilt as specific expressions and mediation of collective political identity or membership (under the influence of Balibar and Hegel). This rebuilt collective identity should be secular:

"When the religious institution decomposes as it happens chronically, and it is the case of Islam today, the invasion of demonic and archaic forces - where there is blurring of boundaries between the animal and human - sprayed dikes of reason as to produce an identity delirium which, like any delirium, considers itself a cure. But secularism as we understand it is another cure for the myth of identity, which does not reject the principle of the responsibility of the human with respect to any other, but gives this responsibility political effectiveness through the subject citizen."<sup>19</sup>

Benslama deconstructs the narrative of "Muslim identity" at its inception. For him, the whole idea of „islamic identity“ is but a symptom of a pre-modern subject, who submits to religious and political structures in which divine law and authoritarian order are the keywords. The modern subject emerged in the revolution against these traditional structures. As he himself states it:

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<sup>19</sup> BENSLAMA 2005. 60.



„The traditional subject (*‘abd*), although possessing all the prerogatives of a subject of law (and divine law is a law and not an arbitrary power), remains subject to a theological - political structure whose goal is to harmonize the human identification of individuality with God and the political space. That structure attempts to govern the psyche and society at the same time. But the modern subject addressed by psychoanalysis appears in societies where the separation between the birth community and the political community has taken place through a civil revolution backed by a powerful government apparatus. We should not forget that, in the traditional world, the patriarchal structure made the father both a *paterfamilias* and a political leader, since the space of the group and that of society were nearly the same. Filiation determined power.”<sup>20</sup>

This explains why God appears in Ramadan’s question about identity. In the narrative of „Muslim identity”, God warrants the discourse about „Muslim politics”, „Muslim community” and „Muslim society”. Being a servant of God is considered compatible with being a citizen of a European state. There lies the critical point about the narrative of „Muslim identity”. Being a citizen of a modern state cannot happen without a political philosophy in which political theology is disqualified. This is not the case in a „Muslim community” where theology, including political theology, puts the citizen after God and his mediators. Schizophrenia takes place and some violently try to solve the contradictions of a political double life imposed by a modern political philosophy and a pre-modern political theology.

Furthermore, the claims of „Muslim identity” reveal a pathological relation between identity and alterity:

„The masses – and not only in the case of Islam – have been dragged in all directions toward unreasonable claims of identity, which can result in the cruelest acts of violence under the guise of appropriating the proper of who they are. By the same token, we willingly proclaim the destruction of the proper of the other, hoping to deprive him and his humanity of it, leaving him as exposed as a skinned animal. I have suggested using the term expropriation to refer to this sense of threat to the proper of what one is, as well as to the desire to dispossess the other because he might prevent the “Self” or the “Us” of the community from remaining the same. Expropriation appears to overflow the classic concept of the death drive, to the extent that it does not cease with the reduction to inanimacy but aims at the annihilation of qualities relative to identification, symbolic

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20 BENSLAMA 2009. 203.

genealogy, and alterity. Thus, expropriation would be at the root of any transindividual processes that feed genocidal hatred.”<sup>21</sup>

Benslama’s expropriation is intriguing and deserves an inquiry on its own. It starts as disidentification. The latter constitutes the core of the narrative of “Muslim identity”; it separates identity and alterity and disengages from society. For any “Muslim” born in Europe, and not only, is one and the other, whereby identity and alterity are components of its subjectivity. By disidentification from its society, the individual expropriates its own complex identity. M. Verkuyten and A. A. Yildiz have studied identification among Turkish-Dutch Muslims. They concluded that „Many participants show low commitment to the nation, and many indicate national disidentification. In addition, there is very strong ethnic and religious identification. Ethnic and Muslim identifications relate negatively to Dutch identification and to stronger Dutch disidentification”.<sup>22</sup>

Essentialisation is another form of expropriation. We have come across Ramadan’s insistence on the “principles of Muslim identity” and its “essential common features”. It is a process of de-pluralisation of Islam, eliminating all the cultural diversity and historical evolution of Islam. It is exactly what fundamentalism does: reducing the complexity of history into the fundamentals of theology and working to bring people to those fundamentals. Another study about cross-national comparison of British Bangladeshis in London and Spanish Moroccans in Madrid has highlighted the process of essentialisation. It is showed that:

“Subjects’ multiplicity is complicated by their desire to meet – not reject – the essentialist standards of belonging to the identity paradigms discursively available to them. Rather than defiantly cherry-picking preferred characteristics of religion, ethnicity and nationality, individuals’ responses suggest that they are trying to fulfil perceived standards of authenticity. Such a contention helps explain the prevalence of Western Muslims’ expressed and well-documented ‘identity crisis’, suggests the enduring relevance of identity essentialisms, and more broadly, complicates post-modern conceptions of identity formation.”<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, expropriation acts as concealment. The narrative of “Muslim identity” hides an indecisive subject, unwilling “to cut the Gordian knot”, in a position between pre-modernity and modernity. Consider Žižek’s magisterial reading, inspired by Benslama, of the function of the veil in Islam, an important marker of “Muslim identity” in Europe. Žižek suggests that:

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21 BENSLAMA 2009. 54

22 VERKUYTEN – YILDIZ 2007. 1448.

23 GEST 2015. 1868.

"What if the true scandal this veil endeavors to obfuscate is not the feminine body hidden by it, but the INEXISTENCE of the feminine? What if, consequently, the ultimate function of the veil is precisely to sustain the illusion that there IS something, the substantial Thing, behind the veil? If, following Nietzsche's equation of truth and woman, we transpose the feminine veil into the veil which conceals the ultimate Truth, the true stakes of the Muslim veil become even clearer. Woman is a treat because she stands for the "undecidability" of truth, for a succession of veils beneath which there is no ultimate hidden core; by veiling her, we create the illusion that there is, beneath the veil, the feminine Truth - the horrible truth of lie and deception, of course. Therein resides the concealed scandal of Islam: only a woman, the very embodiment of the indiscernability of truth and lie, can guarantee Truth. For this reason, she has to remain veiled."<sup>24</sup>

As it seems to me, the truth fundamentalism shies away from is modernity. A fundamentalist is a reluctant individual: unable to live in the past and too fearful to embrace the present. The narrative of "Muslim identity" is not, in reality, a step into the past, but a jump into the dark (religious violence could be the ultimate sign of this jump). It attempts to solve the problem by inventing a simulacrum. In particular, the veil is an emblematic symbol of expropriation and des-identification. First, the veil des-identifies the subject, establishing a boundary between the veiled woman and society. She wants society to see her veiled, claiming the right to be in the public space equally to other non-veiled women. A paradox of its own; she refuses to be equal to other women and takes the veil, and then, she wants to be treated as equal to those she withdrew from. It is a visible example of expropriation. Second, the veil reduces a woman into a *principled* religious being, a believer who obeys to God's commandment (of veiling), thus essentializing her complex identity. The rejection of society is in fact a denial of what makes her identity since all the complex elements of her identity, and alterity should I add, reside in her society. Finally, she conceals her subjectivity by taking the mask of a "Muslim identity". Modern subjectivity is a heavy responsibility. For many individuals, the mask of a "Muslim identity" allows them to retreat and get an easy narrative to relate to, instead of facing the world as it is. This narrative gained notoriety in the seventies and the veil became its symbol: in the aftermath of 1967 war, the failure of development policies and modernisation. Islamic fundamentalism offered the perfect mask; on the one hand, it is a refuge from successive defeats, blaming it all on the distance Muslims took from "True Islam". On the other, it is a merciless and nihilist machine of war.

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24 ŽIŽEK 2006.

## Leïla Babès

Similarly to Chebel, Babès emigrated from Algeria to France as a student in the seventies. She obtained a Master degree in political science from the University of Provence (1981) and a PhD in Political Science at Aix-Marseille 3 (1984). She turned, however, later to sociology, and especially sociology of religion which she teaches as a Professor at the Catholic University of Lille. Babès has been known to promote secularism and an “interior” and “positive Islam”.

Babès considers that all projects carried out to fix the world according to the Islamic ideal only led to demolish the state and the political space. She promotes new relations between constructed and lived Islam. She is interested in the religious emotion which is expressed by other means than the doctrinal teaching (trance or female devotions, worship of saints, couscous as a gift and sacrifice), that is to say a plural and multifaceted Islam, anthropological and not theological. She wants to rehabilitate the spiritual dimension in order to reinterpret Islam as a religion of belief that postulates the primacy of the heart. By the same token, it perceives Islam as a religion of balance, of the measure, but also of the *niyya*, purity of intention, admitting, however, the social constraints of morality, the community and law in Islam.<sup>25</sup>

This spiritual path finds echo in the Sufi way. Babès is not a Sufi, however. Rather she adheres to “a spirituality of belief”. She argues that young Muslims in Europe hold on to Islam as religion of the heart. Spiritualization could help to construe the law favoring its allegorical meaning. Spiritualization cannot achieve its re-reading of Islam unless it is founded on secularization of Islam which implies a double objection process of ritual, a practice of social conformity, and a critical sense that combines intellectual rigor and spiritual expectation. She coined the phrases “interior Islam” and “positive Islam” to identify this spiritualization and secularisation of Islam.

Nevertheless, Babès does not reject the idea of return to “principles” and “essence” of Islam. Her “matrix of Islam” is different from that of Ramadan’s:

“Actually, there is return, but to the essential, to the spirit and not the letter, a liberating, and egalitarian ethics, to the use of reason and intellect, not signs of reification, a legacy from another era. Does this imply a rejection of the normative reference? Islamic law has been a structuring reference for Muslim being, to the point that the abandonment of personal status for Muslims in French Algeria meant renouncing their identity. But keep in mind that Islam is a religion of belief that postulates the primacy of the heart. Social constraint of morality, the community standard is not greater than eschatology. Despite being a religion of law, Islam remains a religion of balance,

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25 BABÈS 2000. 32.

of the measure, but also of the *niyya*, purity of intention. The question of religious practice is inseparable from faith and extends beyond orthopraxis. The canonical observances say nothing (or very little) of the question, the deep belief or practice at large (individual ethics).<sup>26</sup>

Babès suggests an alternative narrative to that of “Muslim identity”. It is based on living Islam as a spirituality, a Christianized Islam, so to speak, which achieves more than a goal: it is a positive Islam in the sense that it refers to the lived reality of young Muslims in Europe. It also disconnects Muslims in Europe from law and its guardians and spaces (the mosque and the jurists). Finally, it fits completely in the framework of a secular society as it is a private interior religiosity. Her answer to the narrative of „Muslim identity” is incisive:

“I do not like feeling trapped in an identity. Mine is multiple, plural. It may be moving. It is not final. I do not belong to any particular community. Religions are worn by peoples’ cultures, customs, norms, social change. What interests me is how people stand in relation to this change. Their relationship to modernity. Thus, in Islam, with its plural traditions and how things are changing in relation to modernity, to change, to the Western Traditions themselves is not static. It is not monolithic. It is made of controversies, contradictions. We must turn our backs on a fixed perception of Islam, where Muslims would be amalgamated by a culture, a tradition evenly. No, Muslims are not determined by diagrams, pictures. There is a plurality of meanings and references we should try to rehabilitate.”<sup>27</sup>

It might be said that the narrative of “Muslim identity” claims as well a European American identity. For example, D. D. Zimmerman shows that young Muslim women in the United States „develop coexisting identities in an attempt to escape categorization as either oppressed or liberated, and to negotiate their identity between integration and loyalty to religion, ethnicity, community and family”.<sup>28</sup> In the process of negotiation, the young women came to claim strong signs of Muslimness such as the veil to comply with the pressure of the communities. The notion of negotiation is too vague. If it means to seek balance between the commandments of God and the citizenship, then the modern subject is not yet born in „Western Islam”. Certainly, any modern subject negotiates within a situation or a context, the different elements of its identity, but within the realm of human society and norms. Negotiation does not mean the same thing to a modern subject and to a pre-modern individual. For the latter, God is the ruler of a system in which are entangled the family, the clan, the community and the religious ritu-

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26 BABES 2000. 31-32.

27 BABES 2011.

28 ZIMMERMAN 2014. 311.

als and guardians. Concessions are made to this system because it primes over modernity. A modern subject does not consider God as a ruler and all concessions go the other way around. This marks the difference between Babès and Ramadan:

“In this relationship with God, placed in a context of constant search, the focus is on personal experience, verbalized by concepts of inquiry and path. Their<sup>29</sup> religious experience thus appears as a kind of movement, an upward curve. Relatively speaking, this phenomenon seems more lean than Glock called experimental dimension, that of the spiritual life and actual experience, rather than fall into the ideological dimension, that of beliefs and religious feelings. But what there is precisely in this modern attitude is the will of distancing from the community consensus, and any institutional representation in favor of a symbolic capital not new, but delved into the religious Tradition and reinterpreted in the light of a purely individual emotion.”<sup>30</sup>

As a sociologist, Babès underlines the complexity of modern societies. There is no way to claim a domination of a narrative of “Muslim identity”, while in reality the majority of young Muslims do not practice religion. She turns this lived religiosity into a form of Islam capable of modernisation. It gives full agency to the modern subject to reconsider the Tradition and live it as an individual experience, afar from any communitarian sense. Here lies the difficult issue: the narrative of “Muslim identity” finds ground in isolated communities, ghettos, where people start to distance themselves socially and culturally from the mainstream society. A double movement is needed then: modern societies reclaiming conceded places to “Muslim communities” and intellectually speaking a critical thought of modern subjectivity to deconstruct the illusions of “Muslim identity”.

## Conclusion

It has been shown that the narrative of “Muslim identity” relies on a vague idea about the “Muslim principles and values”. It constructs an artificial “Muslimness” out of imagined origins of Islam. It is an-anti modern thought, which in practice, leads to disintegration, des-identification, expropriation, concealment and essentialisation. Any discourse on Muslim identity is an illusion, an intellectual ghetto and a radical act. It assumes that Muslim Identity is static and unilateral self and the other interact in permanent construction. The solution to a concrete social problem can not be identity. All this does not make the identity problem a valid

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<sup>29</sup> She refers to a majority of young Muslims she studied in France in the nineties and their „islam positif”.

<sup>30</sup> BABÈS 1996. 131.

problem. For one is always the one and the other. That is why the question asked by T. Ramadan is false. For everyone is at the same time the one and the other, and God cannot want two things at the same time, in the same person. Theology put apart, for anthropological reasons, humans change over time and place and evolve.

Can there be a way out from the narrative of Muslim identity? This article contributes to existing knowledge on identity and alterity as one complex process with multiple aspects by providing evidence from three critical Muslim intellectuals (Chebel, Benslama and Babès). These intellectuals deconstruct the narrative of "Muslim identity" through different mechanisms. Chebel uses the rationalist repertoire of Islamic civilisation to offer an alternative "origin" which finds its continuity in Western modernity. Chebel believes that without the emergence of the modern subject and freedom from subjection to the community, there cannot be subjectivity, and therefore, modernity in Islam. Benslama draws attention to the pathological character of the narrative of "Muslim identity" by which it oeuvres for expropriation of the other. Babès suggests an interior Islam, a sort of post-modern spirituality in which the modern subject establishes a link with God, discarding the juridical and communitarian aspects of Islam.

The contribution of this study has been to put forward that the narrative of "Muslim identity" is neither valid nor inevitable. It also showed that critical Muslim intellectuals are able to provide viable alternatives. Concrete measures to compete with the narrative of "Muslim identity" have been taken. Chebel founded the Review of Enlightenment *Noor* and Benslama a *University of Freedoms*. Certainly, there are limitations of such initiatives and the logistics of the fundamentalist outweigh those of critical intellectuals. At any rate, it remains possible to reclaim lost spaces to Islamic fundamentalism and its rhetoric.

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## THE SACRED BODY AND THE FASCINATION OF ORTHOPRAXY: THE RELIGIOUS CORPUS OF HUNGARIAN MUSLIM WOMEN

**Abstract:** Nowhere is the crisis of the post-modern subject more evident than in its representations of the body. Post-modernity wavers, anxiously, between embodiment and dis-embodiment. It is argued, here, that the orthoprax appeal of Islam to European converts stems from its emphasis on the purification of the individual and collective bodies. Islamic law provides an ethical and legal springboard, albeit pre-modern, the aim of which is to frame the scattered body and to set its boundaries in time and space. Our data come from the corpus of religious texts (94 documents) produced and distributed by members of the group *Islám és a nők* ("Islam and women"), established by Hungarian Muslim women in Budapest, and uploaded to the documents of the Facebook site of the community. Most of the documents are transcripts or handouts for lectures on various subjects.

**Keywords:** Body, orthopraxy, Hungarian Muslim women, conversion, religious corpus.

Human beings are fascinated, confused and tormented by their bodies. A glance at everyday cultural content attests to the overwhelming presence of the body. *The Walking Dead*, currently one of the most popular TV shows, displays the body in all its positions: the philosophical problem of the body and the soul, tattoos, violence, superstition, dead bodies, demons, trance, etc. Here lies a dismantled body, both of individuals and of groups, in a flayed way, reminiscent of Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. As modernity unchained the body from the limits of religion and other traditional structures, a high risk emerged: the body without frame. Reason became soon unable to control this fresh and new modern body. Post-modernity is not at ease with the body either. All at once, it re-discovers the need to embody things, to question the body and to put limits to its freedom.

The post-modern discomfort with the body benefits to religion, especially to lived or practiced religion. The body exalts in lived religions while, at the same time, it voluntarily submits to the ritual and order. As A. Zito puts it,

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: belhaj.abdessamad@gmail.com

\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: biaspeidl@gmail.com

“It is through the practical, ritual, and moral maintenance of embodied persons that religions thrive or fail, and this maintenance does entail an enormity of material sustenance/support/contrivance. But at its center, as its motor and goal, lay the energy and the puzzle of the embodied human self”.<sup>1</sup>

Religions have always been intriguing ways to control the body. Whatever the religious form one embraces, it will find out, at one point or another that its priority is to frame the body.

For example, Islam requires the converts to purify their bodies, *ghusl* before pronouncing the faith testimony; they should take a shower (presumably to purify the body from impurities of the body and the soul). It is a religion that built its legitimacy on controlling *jāhiliyya*, a pagan unchained body. In the modern Islamic ideology, there exists, as well, an overstated fascination with the body; Islamists are ensnared with the women’s body as they reacted the veil, a symbol of this fascination in reverse.<sup>2</sup> Radical Islamic movements sustain a fascist fascination with the body: trained, black masked young men, military allure who behead their victims. Islam’s resistance to modernity (to free the body) and use of the problematic relationship with the body in post-modernity appeal to the seekers of orthopraxy.

It is contended here that the primary reason Hungarian Muslim women converted to Islam is its orthoprax appeal. This appears clearly from the corpus of texts in Hungarian made available to the members of the Facebook group *Islám és a nők*, the most active group of Hungarian Muslim women in both virtual and real spheres. We do not argue, like D. Winchester, that converts produce new moral selves in and through the use of embodied religious practices of ritual prayer, fasting and covering formed within converts the moral dispositions, or habitus, associated with becoming a “good Muslim.”<sup>3</sup> Instead, we contest that converts to Islam seek to mould themselves into an image of a good Muslim or a moral self. Such ideal does not exist and cannot exist. Representations of a good Muslim do exist, of course. But, then, one has to understand the rationale of these representations, which in our view, lies in the crisis of the post-modern subject. In particular, the quest of an unyielding moral frame indicates a crisis of the body. Conversion is but a turn in this crisis and an attempt to solve it. Soon, the converts are doomed to discover that there is no solution indeed.

1 ZITO 2011. 20.

2 MALTI-DOUGLAS 1995. 67-75.

3 WINCHESTER 2008. 1753.

## Mapping the religion: law, faith and ethics

It is symptomatic of the post-modern age that religions can no longer rely on authority to establish a fixed interpretation or representation of their beliefs. There is an increasing need for guide books to all religions, which unsurprisingly differ from each other. No repertoire of Islamic texts today can do without a map. Islam, especially Sunni Islam, appears as an ocean of traditions with very few milestones (the texts of the Qur'an and Muḥammad's traditions to which our informants do not have direct access), but people today express the need to live religion. Additionally, Islam is also a civilization that spans the period of 14 centuries until the modern times. Any overview of this religion is ultimately reductive and selective.

### 1) *Overviewing Islam*

One way of mapping Islam is the trilateral approach: Islam is defined as faith (*īmān*), law (*islām*) and ethics (*iḥsān*), a classification which is based on a tradition of the Prophet, known as the "Gabriel tradition". This mapping reflects the need of subjects to understand and construct Islam in a comprehensible way. In this sense, *Islām és a nők* choose this trilateral approach as a gate to Islam, rephrasing it as follows: the three ways according to which we might build our faith.

Our informants have recourse to a set of rhetoric strategies to build up a coherent frame of Islam. The most evident strategy is asking questions. For example: Every religion teaches that human beings should do the good. Why then should one follow Islam precisely? What does a school of religious law (*madhhab*) mean? And why is it necessary to follow one of them? Sometimes, the questions reflect a genuine didactic interest in explaining the terminology and the tenets of Islam. Often, the questions respond to the polemics against Islam and set to persuade the reader that Islam is the right path to go. An example would be the following questions: did Islam spread by sword? Why did the Prophet Muḥammad take many wives?

A second strategy is brevity whereby the documents are shortly entitled and concisely written in order to offer to the reader the essential of the matter. For example, one can read documents entitled pilgrimage, polygamy or women's education in few pages. This corpus is not modelled after "Islam for the dummies". For the primary readers, this corpus addresses are Hungarian Muslim women. This can be inferred from the debates among Muslim scholars these documents recall. There is also a considerable deal of Islamic vocabulary and technical details of Islamic law. Instead, these short pieces are meant to lead the reader to think that Islam's position on pilgrimage is simple and could be reduced to few statements; simple semiotics of a complex religion. Longer pieces would mean longer debates, nuances, probability and uncertainty and, above all, fragmentation of

the body of knowledge (which is the reality of any culture or religion). A secondary female reader might be interested as a potential target of Islamic mission (*da'wa*). Such reader is also addressed. Conciseness is there to offer her the "straight answer" about the issue she would pick up to read. Inside the text, she would encounter many sentences the function of which is persuading her that Islam provides concrete divine solutions of the problems she faces. Considered in the context of "profligate information", an effective body of knowledge should provide quickly and tightly the answer.

Comparison is probably the most suitable strategy for missionary work. Predictably, comparison takes places between Christianity and Islam. The members of the group were born Christians (predominantly Catholic) before becoming Muslims. The documents compare Islam and Christianity on a theological level, especially on Christology and Eva's sin. This is a common motif of Muslim apologetic from the Quran to the Internet. The significance of such documents lies in the illusion they give that Islam and Christianity could be compared in a document, or be compared at all in a way to make one of them defeat the other. Additionally, being ex-Christians, such comparisons allow the members of the group to exorcise the other in themselves. That is, while alterity (Christianity) which forms an inseparable part of their identity, for they cannot delete what they were from what they are for obvious physical and cultural reasons, opposing the two religions bluntly and in a live-or-die fight, these agents acquire the unity of the their spiritual body.

These examples of rhetoric strategies succeed in offering an engaging "body of knowledge" (through questions, conciseness and comparisons) to readers on Facebook, with little time, and quests of the essential. This embodiment of a religious and post-modern Ockham's razor, draws also on Islam's position in the history of religions, or rather in the history of religious rhetoric. Islam presented itself, as mirrored by the written and canonized religious documents, as the simple way of divine truth in the middle of misleading religions.

## 2) Law

Out of 94 documents, some 48 documents concern law. Within this legal content, ritual, the most regular human tool for framing the body, emerges as predominant. In particular, body purity and prayer (which go hand in hand in Islam), stand at the heart of the corpus. *Dhikr* (invocations) and surrogatory prayers complete the five daily prayers. There are no questions related to paying almsgiving (a financial obligation towards the poor) or fasting Ramadan (a physical ritual). One cannot explain such absence with the discarding of the community body in favour of the individual body; pilgrimage and other community activities are covered.

However, unmistakably, the body of the individual attracts more focus than the community body. Death and burial, also topics of perennial human anxiety,

are present. Behind body ritual, family law issues are important: divorce, heritage and marriage. Of particular interest are the questions of the veil, polygamy, intermarriage and menstruation as they all touch directly female body and intimacy. The corpus includes also two questions of prohibited substances, considered impure in Islam: alcohol and swine. Interest in terminology of law and the different categories of legal qualifications: invalidating, forbidden, permissible, reprehensible, recommended and obligatory shows the need to control a law that is, after all, complex.

That prayer and family law dominate the section on law and the whole corpus, is indicative of how important the body stands for the Hungarian Muslim women. Obligatory prayer, preceded by body purification, *wuḍūʿ*, is performed five times a day repetitively creating moments and spaces, every couple of hours, to get into the frame of worshipping God. These five prayers are completed with other prayers such as the prayer of need, the prayer of repentance, and invocations. The prayer in Islam does not follow the pattern of prayers in Christianity, to which Hungarian Muslim women are used to. It is an exercise, both physical and spiritual, of a couple of 5-10 minutes. As women cannot voice their recitation of the Quran during the prayer, silence could be an instigator of a further absorption into the communion with God. Women should also wear the veil during the prayers (at home) to perform the prayer, sacralising, thus, the body and the moment. It is a sport of the spirit and the body, as described by the very popular Muslim author today Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.<sup>4</sup>

As for the family issues, they invest the female body and its gender roles. Islam offers a submissive role to women that could appeal to some ambiguous post-modern subjects who interpret this submission to be without humiliation and a sort of freedom without self-determination; that is to say, a framed body without slavery. As a traditional and, therefore conservative, system of social order, Islamic law might seem to some women more assuring than the uncertainty of post-modern family. This paradox is best exemplified by the so-called Islamic feminism which is currently *en vogue* even in some Western universities.

Among the Sunni schools of law, the corpus shows preference for the Ḥanafī school. A historical reason explains this choice. The group of Hungarian Muslim women is led by members of the community of *Magyar Iszlám Közösség*, founded by Mihálffy Balázs and Bolek Zoltán who embraced a Sufi Turkish interpretation of Islam.<sup>5</sup> This interpretation follows the Ḥanafī school.

One dimension that is closely related to law is obligation. Islamic law, like any ancient or medieval law, enjoins the believer to accept the legal obligations as a sign of submission to God. Abdolkarim Soroush succinctly put it as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWIYYA 1998. 279.

<sup>5</sup> Zoltán Bolek has translated a work ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767) the founder of the Ḥanafī school: ABU HANIFAH, *al-Fiqh al-akbar*, trans. Arslan Yvette and Bolek Zoltán, Magyar Iszlám Közösség, 2014.



“The language of religion and religious law is the language of duties, not rights; religious people habitually think more about their obligations than about their rights. They concentrate more on what God expects from them than on what they themselves desire. They look among their duties to find their rights, not vice versa”.<sup>6</sup>

Conversely, modernity shifts the focus from obligations to rights, and humans increase the area of their rights, perceiving their duties as the respect of the others' rights. Post-modernity re-introduces obligations. There might be here a convergence of pre-modern Muslim assertion of obligations and post-modern annoyance with rights.

### 3) Ethics

In Islam, ethics are a branch, an auxiliary or the purpose of law. There are certainly non-legalistic interpretations of ethics of Greek, Persian and Sufi origins. Furthermore, even the texts and the authoritative moral traditions of Islam represent a dimension of faith and consciousness, like in other religions and systems of belief. It is, however, a fact that the dominating interpretations of Sunni and Shi'i Islam adhere to legalistic ethics of three sources: divine commands, principled ethics and model-ethics (following the Prophet, his companions and his family). Since God is the law-giver and knows best the good and the bad, and God communicated his command through revelation, it is the obligation of the individual to follow the revealed law (the precise meaning of *sharī'a*). Ethics is a perfection of this law. That is the sense of *ihsān*, perfection or excellence whereby the believer seeks to engage a spiritual dimension in the application of religion.

The corpus of *Iszlám és a nők* clearly adheres to ethics as model-ethics of the Prophet. Moral theology appears four times in the corpus: on the notion of natural disposition, on common sense, on the heart and the reason, and on the personal responsibility of human acts. One ethical issue that attracts attention of the reader is the emphasis on the great difference between Muslims and Islam, which argues that Islam is a perfect religion, but that Muslims today are far from applying Islam. This stems from model-ethics. The model of the Prophet and his companions, for the Sunnis, is considered perfect and the rest of Muslims have to be checked against this model. By the nature of things, time corrupts the rest of Muslims who are increasingly a disgrace to Islam. They cannot be trusted unless they stick more vehemently to law. This means that the more a generation is far from the “original” model in time and behaviour, the more it needs law, hence the *sharī'a*-addiction of modern Islam. Issues of bioethics such as abortion and transplantation are treated in a legalistic way as well.

Markedly, the corpus promotes Sunna, the way of the Prophet, as the model-ethics to follow. This is another locus of embodiment. Despite its orthoprax

6 SOROUGH 2000. 129-130.

character, Islam still has a variety of interpretations that could confuse the seeker of the right path. The Prophet emerges, today, probably more than any time in the history of Islam, as an embodiment of the perfect Islam (to save Muslims from “corrupted” interpretations). One document asks the following question: what did the Prophet read after the opening chapter of the Quran in the prayer? Even if the law leaves the believer freedom to choose among 113 Quranic chapters a chapter or a part of it to recite in the prayer (in addition to the first chapter which is obligatory), following the Prophet’s way is almost inevitably the consequence of the legalistic-moralistic strong frame of Islam. One cannot but recall here what Brannon Wheeler says about the relationship between the prophet Muḥammad’s sacrifice of the camels and the distribution of his hair at the conclusion of his farewell pilgrimage just before his death and the outset of Islam:

„The prophet Muḥammad’s distribution of his hair, detached from his body at the time of his desacralization from the *Hajj* delineates the Meccan sanctuary as the place of origination from which was spread both the physical and textual corpus of the Prophet’s life. Whether by design or not, the traditional Islamic descriptions of this episode from the life of the prophet Muḥammad are not unlike narratives found in Buddhist, Iranian, Christian and other traditions in which the body of a primal being is dismembered to create a new social order. Through the gift of the sacrificial camels and parts of his own body, the prophet Muḥammad is portrayed, in this episode, as making a figurative and literal offering of himself at the origins of Islamic civilization.”<sup>7</sup>

The model can also be a woman, especially for the group members, and ‘Ā’isha, the preferred and beloved woman of Muḥammad, incarnates for Sunnis the perfect model. An entire document is dedicated to her.

#### 4) *Faith*

Only 16 documents relay to faith and four out of six pillars of Sunni faith are covered: the belief in God, the prophets, the angels and the Judgment Day. The corpus uses the word Allah, rather than God to mark the boundary between Allah and the Gods of the others. Besides, the Prophets are looked at according to the Quranic narrative that starts with Adam and ends with Muḥammad. The belief in revelations and the predestination are missing. Avoiding the books of the others (Christians and Jews) is because they are anyway false while predestination

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<sup>7</sup> WHEELER 2010. 341. See also the excellent article of Denis Gril in which he shows the Companions’ veneration of the Prophet’s body, „as if physical contact with him places them directly in the presence of a sacred reality”: GRIL 2006. 48.

stands against subjectivity. Predestination could also lead to a backlash: polemics against Islam focus usually on its fatalism.

A prominent feature of discourse on faith is comparison with Christianity and polemics as indicated above. Seven documents compare globally the two religions. A recurrent topic of comparison and of Muslim polemics is the guilt of Eve. This is covered in three documents. The point of this comparison is to prove that Islam is superior to Christianity because it does not consider Eve guilty of the fall of Adam from heaven. On the contrary, this indicates that Islam gives more rights to women than does Christianity. This fallacy ignores the fact that the rights of women today are acquired thanks to Western modernity. The jump has been from pre-modern societies to modern ones and Muslim societies are still considerably pre-modern. Medieval or ancient Christian societies were as patriarchal as Muslim societies. Even if Western modernity emerged in Christian societies, it did so against the Christian system of values. Therefore, comparison is not reason here.

Why would a post-modern subject compare Christianity and Islam and find satisfaction in a system of belief that allegedly treats better women while there is a third system which does better than the first two? The answer is that the third system is secular and leaves women to themselves, on the track of rights. As the post-modern agent looks for rules, obligations and boundaries, it consciously prefers pre-modern systems. Some European women, non-Muslim, often would say remarks such as: is it *really* that modernity gives more rights to women?

## Orthopraxy

It appears clear from the previous section that orthopraxy, more than orthodoxy, attracts the group into Islamic teachings. In the following, we suggest a closer reading of the legalistic material we described so far in general terms.

### 1) *Law abiding believer*

To understand the importance of law in Islam, one has to grasp its relationship to faith and the boundaries of disbelief. Most Muslim theological schools have made acts expressions of belief. The Quran and *sunna*, the two main sources of Islamic law, make it clear that the believer should respect, in all due, the divine commandments. For example, failing to practice prayer everyday five times, voluntarily, is an act of disbelief. Moreover, Islamic law claims to cover all aspects of life, from birth to death, and from the first moment in the day (which should start with ablution and prayer) until going to bed (with a special invocation for that). This leaves almost nothing out of the authority of law.

## 2) Purification

What lies at the heart of the corpus is purification.<sup>8</sup> Ablution and prayer are both acts of purifying the body before meeting God. Pilgrimage is also an act of purification. After the death of the body, there is concern about its purification before burial. One document speaks about the natural disposition which is pure from other than Islam and/or monotheism, supposed to be the only pure and authentic religions. Alcohol and swine are impure foods. Details are given about menstruation and how it makes the body impure.

## 3) Reciting the Quran

The Quran itself is a body of text. It literarily and symbolically indicates Islam. Reciting the Quran is considered an act of adoration in Islam, *'ibāda* and, therefore, could not be performed while the body is impure. For example, a non-Muslim or a Muslim who did not take a shower or do the ablution or a woman in state of menstruation should not read or touch the Quran. Reading or listening to the Quran transforms the body and the soul. There is also an introduction to the Quran. The corpus is interested in specific chapters, selected and explained: Chapters 1 and 2. The first is the most important because its reading is obligatory in the prayer and because it summarizes the religion of Islam as submission to God. The Second Chapter is the largest in the Quran and contains various legal and non-legal matters. The group suggests a document with short *suras* and verses to be used for the prayer. There is the exegesis of Chapter 12 (Joseph), the one favourite chapters of Muslims today, telling the story of this Biblical prophet who triumphed over temptation and desire. Finally, an important hermeneutic question is asked: what are the commandments of the Quran which are obligatory?

The Quran plays a major role in the modern piety of Muslim women. In this regard, Saba Mahmoud has shown through the case of Egyptian Muslim women that "reciting short verses of the Quran and other supplicatory prayers (*awrād*)<sup>9</sup>, which members of the audience could memorize and repeat during the day, impart a sense of benediction to their chores".<sup>10</sup>

## 4) Worshipping

As mentioned above, every lawful act done by a Muslim, is an act of worshipping and is compensated accordingly. However, a more narrow sense of worshipping does exist, that of performing acts of prayer or invocation to adore God.

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<sup>8</sup> Studies on the body in Islam that showed the importance of purification to this religion are legion. Suffices here to mention three studies: KHURI 2001. 49-59 ; KATZ 2002. 29-57; BELHAJ 2014. 41-53. Atmane Aggoun goes as far to speak of the « the obsession of purity » in Islam: AGGOUN 2010. 120-134.

<sup>9</sup> We encountered in our Hungarian case under the name of *dhikr*

<sup>10</sup> MAHMOUD 2005. 93.

Invocation is less and prayer is much present. Invocation is a free act that can be done at anytime and there is no single obligatory formula. Prayer, on the other hand, is an obligatory act (the five day prayers) and forms a pillar of Islam. Additionally, surrogatory prayers, the ones that occur occasionally or daily, but only recommended, offer opportunities to get in the frame of devotion to God.

Obligatory prayers are detailed and explained in the corpus, starting from ablution to the prayer of the mosque (performed when the person enters the mosque and before the start of official collective prayer). An important issue the corpus discusses, in this regard, is the replacement of prayers in case a person misses the exact time of the prayer. Replacement is important for our informants because of the rhythm of modern life: work and sleep. Pre-modern time and prayers correspond to pre-industrial societies, agricultural or nomadic, in which the sun regulates the moments of activity and prayer. In modern societies, work, at the office or at the factory, rules over the day. The subject loses control over time. Prayer could be then an occasion of a time-out, even if performed out of its time.

The occasional prayers are interesting in themselves: prayer of the need and prayer of repentance which establish a direct relationship with God, a confession and quest of help. It is a Christian religious emotion, performed in physical exercises since any prayer in Islam is a physical activity.

Repetition of daily and surrogatory prayers inscribes the religion in the body (as an individual and as a community). This repetitive performance could be seen as a "spoiled devotional rite by making them altogether mechanical"<sup>11</sup>. A British traveller in the 19<sup>th</sup> century said that "the ablution before prayer is a ceremony altogether beautiful in its conception, and touchingly appropriate in its religious sentiments, is marred by its mechanical execution. The same is true of the attitudes of the prayer. These are assumed with a mechanical uniformity quite foreign to a true devotion".<sup>12</sup> Precisely, it is about mechanics. This repetition creates a bond with God and with the community so strong with time, even if it is shallow in terms of spirituality.

## Subjugating the body

Hitherto, we have described the religious map promoted by the Group of Hungarian Muslim women. It is our intention now to go a step further to attend to the functions of this religious discourse which we claim to be mainly controlling the body. For a post-modern subject, the body is too free and needs limits.

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11 STARRETT 1995. 956.

12 STARRETT 1995. 956.

### 1) *Why orthopraxy?*

As we explored the essential and multiform link between the corpus of religion and body, an immediate question emerges: what is the function of orthopraxy in the lives of these women? The post-modern illusionary quest for boundaries could be the reason of the turn to orthopraxy. For some post-modern subjects, Islam offers the right way; it controls the posture, the space and the extension of the body. For the Hungarian Muslim women, the right practice goes hand in hand with the right life and the right deployment in time and space. Only the religion that could contain all dimensions of the body could be right. Orthopraxy provides embodiment; a very sought after object in post-modernity. Piety then is not requested for its own sake or in order to be a good Muslim or to be a right person. The post-modern subject needs benchmarks to feel some order around it. The quest for order could be the ultimate reason these women find refuge in Islam.

Paradoxically, orthopraxy is also the gate to lived religion. Consider for example how Sufism started as a movement of religious fervour, practice and ascetics and ended as a metaphysical doctrine and heterodox in opposition to *sharī'a*. As the individual fails to respect regularly the orthoprax way (let us say waking up everyday at 4 in the morning to fulfil the dawn prayer), the individual starts a process of accommodating orthopraxy, enjoying a freedom within the boundaries. It also starts to live by the rules, knowing when to bypass them and go back to the right path. A favourite subject of *fatwas* is dispensation, *rukḥṣa*. Repentance, *taṭwba* becomes the return ticket to the mercy of God. It is also a mark of agency, that the believer controls its life. For a modern subject, this is mere hypocrisy, but for a post-modern subject, it is the middle way between rigidity (supposed to be pre-modern) and permissibility (modernity).

As it realises the limits and the burdens of being the subject, alone in the world, the post-modern individual rediscovers the need to be an object. Hence the quest for submission to a divine order, as it is aware that submission to another human order is absurd. This divine order, the more it is self-confident and assertive, the more it gives, albeit for a while, the feeling of belonging to God and to His realm; servitude to God and freedom from all the rest, repugnant for a modern subject, appears attractive for a post-modern person. Feeling as an object to God's will in a post-modern world does not rule out being a subject of its modern world. The quest for submission could be misleading today as it appeals both to Muslims and European converts to Islam for different reasons; born Muslims are afraid of modernity which destroy their pre-modern world and consider submission to God as a shelter in a post-apocalyptic world. To Western converts, submission is a sweet and mystic emotion in a post-rational and post-differentiated world; a nostalgia of pre-modernity.

There remains the issue of orthopraxy as communication, a central notion to our transformations today. In a different, but comparable, religious context, it has been exposed that the body is a mediator or a semiotic resource, the

function of which is linking the body with other bodies and with the transcendent through religious practice. The body, then, enters into a state of embodied prayer (communion).<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, an embodied prayer has limits, at least in the Muslim context. For being with God and feeling its presence could be an embodiment, but what kind of body, then, God could be? It is the whole problem faced by Sufis, union with God, being embodied by God, or witnessing its presence.

## 2) Women's body

Women's body is probably the most controversial field of clash between Islam and modernity. The texts of Islam as well as Muslim societies and cultures promote patriarchy and overlook women. This could not be otherwise in a pre-modern world. Modernity still struggles to free women's bodies among Muslims in the Muslim world as well as in the West.

Still, some European women voluntarily accept to give back their bodies to tradition. In a post-modern age, ethical and esthetical standards seem chaotic and fragmented. For many women, this is confusing. There must be an *objective* standard against which a woman's body should be ethically and aesthetically evaluated. Otherwise, motherhood, a biological and cultural process, loses its meaning. Hippism and nudism are post-modern signs of de-objectification of ethics and aesthetics. In *The Walking Dead*, every time and then, the protagonists need a safe place to re-establish ethical standards and to be *human* again. Their bodies are tired, and so is the audience, from killing other bodies. A rejection of subjective standards in post-modernity leads to a pursuit of boundaries. Every *body* needs a break.

Protecting the body is one of the post-modern placebo solutions to "deobjectivation" of norms. Here comes the veil. M. H. Benkheira explains the function of the veil this way "The veil protects from the offence not in the same way an umbrella protects from the rain or a coat from the wind, but rather as a sign which attests of the woman's body as taboo"<sup>14</sup>. This placebo-protection is best expressed by one document in a classic, still a fallacious way by a document in the corpus:

"Suppose you have two sisters who are twins, they are both equally beautiful. Strolling down the street, one of them is dressed according to Islamic veil, so only her face and hands to the wrists appears. The other twin girl wears Western clothes, a mini skirt or shorts. In one corner, there is a hooligan or ruffian who is waiting to pass at a girl. Who will make a pass? The veiled or non-veiled girl? Of course, the one wearing miniskirts or shorts will make a pass at

<sup>13</sup> CORWIN 2012. 396.

<sup>14</sup> BENKHEIRA 1997. 58. To date, the most comprehensive scholarly study on body and Islamic law is: KRAWIEZ 1991. For a general and passionate introduction to the body in Islam beyond the texts of Islam, see: CHEBEL 1999. For a short overview of the body in Islam limited to the religious literature, see: WINTER 1995. 36-45.



her. These clothes are an indirect invitation to the opposite sex, and let him know that you can start with me. The Qur'an rightly argued that the veil protects women from being upset."<sup>15</sup>

Islamic law as a protector from a Western civilisation going astray is indeed a shared belief among Muslims, moderates and conservatives alike. "Detabooisation" of the body in modernity, a process that continues in considerable dimensions in the last fifty years, calls for a "retabooisation". For our Hungarian Muslim women, and for other converts we met in other European countries, post-modernity calls for *sharī'a*:

"The United States is reportedly one of the most advanced countries in the world. In addition, there occurs most often violence against women throughout the world. An FBI report, according to the 1990 year, a daily average of 1,756 cases of rape in the United State [...] Imagine the scenario that if the American people are complying with the requirements of the veil. Whenever a man looks at a woman indecently, with shameless thoughts entering his mind, he looks down. Every woman wears the veil, so the whole body is covered except the face and hands of the elbow. After all, if a man yet rapes a woman, you get the death penalty. Let me ask you now, the number of violence will increase, stay the same, or will decrease? The introduction of *sharī'a* reduces the proportion of rape. Of course, as soon *sharī'a* is introduced, the positive results will inevitably appear. If the Islamic *sharī'a* is introduced anywhere in the world, whether in America or Europe, society will breathe more freely. The veil does not demean the woman, but rather raises her and preserves her dignity and purity."<sup>16</sup>

Purity is also at stake in intermarriage. Muslim women in Singapore accept close friendship with non-Muslim men, but refuse to any

"Physical intimate relations [...] they want to remain religiously pure by only marrying other Muslims [...] it is a defensive strategy

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15 A current of ideas within Western feminism and dominating among „Muslim academics" is to defend the veil as a symbol of „liberation of women". See a recent example: AL-MAHADIN 2013. 3-18. Compare to Baber Johanson's conclusion about the institution of marriage in Islam: „which has become a symbol of social hierarchies and social exchange, a symbol of the non-commercial world, and a symbol of a social order of a world that has passed. This symbolical function of the institution weighs heavily on the female body and its legal and social valorization. It sets a limit to women's efforts to gain access to autonomy and emancipation outside the hierarchies of gender and kinship. It transforms the woman's body itself into a symbol of the permanence of the correct social exchange". JOHANSEN 1996. 99-100.

16 "Hijab for women" (Hidzsáb a nők számára) the handout of a lecture given by one of the members of the community in the mosque.

that allows them and the non-Muslims to engage with each other, albeit with the 'ground rules' clearly established".<sup>17</sup>

It is no different here. To the question: if wife is married to a Christian converts to Islam, what happens to their marriage? Here is the answer as stated in one document:

"The marriage shall not cease immediately. Islam should be offered to the husband. If he converts, marriage continues. If not, then the divorce happens automatically"<sup>18</sup>

The women's body is a sanctuary; it can be accessible as long as the husband breaks the bond of his body politic, joining the new body politic. It is a mechanism of quasi-endogenous marriage.

### 3) *Body transplantation*

A document written in 1874 words reiterates the post-modern need to sanctify the body. The document criticises a Muslim position that refuses categorically body transplantation, taking a progressive stance and supporting science. However, it accepts fully the Muslim premises about the metaphysical sense of the body and its physical resurrection after death. The document assures the sceptics that, in the hereafter, the body will come together, reconciling thus the concerns of religion and science. This in-between attitude preserves the integrity of the body as a self, which lies at the core of post-modern subjectivity, and the modern self-interest or benefit.

The document uses two sorts of arguments: a utilitarian argument whereby the humans benefit considerably from body transplantation and a teleological argument according to which human life is protected in Islam and body transplantation saves lives:

"It is well known that the Islamic religion with regard to life, death, the afterlife and as natural and meaningful phases, it attaches importance to the healthy, peaceful and safe life of both individuals and societies. In this sense, it is evident that the Muslim community initially hesitates regarding the issue of organ transplantation, and even be against it and rejected it based on religious reasons. These reactions guarantee the resistance of traditional community to prevent and maintain the social structure when they face an innovation. However, these days it is proven that organ transplantation is a cure that brings people back to life. So, we should solve these hesitations,

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17 NASER – PEREIRA – TURNER 2009. 252.

18 Quote from a handout distributed among women attending one of the mosques in Budapest.

step out of them and to this end, steps should be taken seriously in terms of informing people on the subject of these hesitations.”<sup>19</sup>

The document displays some anxiety; body transplantation, it maintains, should be the last resort (the necessity argument) because, after all, it definitively alters the human body. Among the jurists who allow body transplantation, there is an exception: the heart.<sup>20</sup>

Hesitation of Muslims is understandable<sup>21</sup>; considering what has been said earlier on the purity of the believer’s body, it would be meaningless to accept body transplantation. Recently, a Professor of ethics at a faculty of medicine was asked by the dean to encourage Muslim students to convince their community to donate their organs. Hesitation of Muslims is rather a pre-modern fear of impurity, disintegration and missing the physical resurrection. Our document’s author also hesitates, but for a different reason:

„We should keep in mind that in the future there will be a framework of religious principles fitting solution for organ transplantation. If only the research will cover the development of the transplant procedure, then there will be no other alternative. For this reason, experts in the field have to focus on development rather than the search for alternatives to the transplant procedure.”<sup>22</sup>

The document stresses the incapacity of science for the moment to offer the cutting-edge solution. Science has many venues, and there should be focus on one solution. Post-modern subjects do not reject science, but are disappointed in it. Religion appears more satisfying as it offers, presumably, one solution. Religious principles are flexible enough to fit this one solution.

#### 4) *The community’s body*

One tradition attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad states that “the believers in their mutual love, mercy and sympathy are like one body; when any part complains, the rest of the body responds to it with wakefulness and fever”.<sup>23</sup> It is a normative statement and does not reflect the reality of Muslims from the 7<sup>th</sup> century until today. It is, however, in the spirit of time, meaning pre-modern bonds, to imagine, even for political reasons, a communal body based on belief. In modern societies, the community is the sum of individuals. Unsatisfied, post-modern

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<sup>19</sup> Quote from a text on transplantation in Islam distributed in the Hungarian Islamic Community (Magyar Iszlám Közösség)

<sup>20</sup> HOUOT 2006. 338.

<sup>21</sup> For the Muslim ethical-juristic debates about organ transplantation, see: MOOSA 2002. 329-356.

<sup>22</sup> Quote from a spreadsheet distributed among women attending one of the mosques in Budapest.

<sup>23</sup> AL-BUKHARI 1993. no. 5665.

subjects tend to recompose traditional ties to enrich their subjectivities, but not against them. Social media is the perfect tool of community in the post-modern age; it offers a community platform with the subject's control over it, (be-friending, de-friending, liking, etc.).

Overall, within this pious corpus, there is little interest in body politics. For instance, no sign of Palestine and other "Muslim causes". Nothing is written about politics *per se*, neither about the Muslim world nor about Hungary. There is a bookmarked paper about the ascension of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Pilgrimage is probably the most visible form of communal body the corpus endorses. The whole Muslim world is represented in Mecca during 10 days. There is, however, interest in the boundaries between believers and non-believers. For instance, the chapter 109 of the Quran (the Unbelievers) is mentioned three times. It is one of the most pronounced messages of dis-connection between Muslims and non-Muslims:

"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate  
109:1 Say: 'O unbelievers, I serve not what you serve  
and you are not serving what I serve,  
nor am I serving what you have served,  
neither are you serving what I serve

109:5 To you your religion, and to me my religion!"<sup>24</sup>

The metaphor of terrorism as a poison of the body<sup>25</sup> could explain the Muslim interest in spreading information about ISIS. Our informants condemn, like most Muslims, the ideology and strategies of the ISIS. Especially in Europe, the ISIS appears as a poison to the imagined Muslim community. The ISIS works against everything Hungarian Muslims look for in Islam. Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia are seen as anomalies of Islam and responsible for violence and extremism.

Then, there is the body of the nation, Hungary. Hungarian Muslims aspire to remain part of the Hungarian communal body. For this reason, a narrative of Islam as part of the Hungarian body is under construction. The older Islam entered Hungary, the more it is recuperated. Thus, one of the documents in the corpus (4652 words) offers a detailed biography of Durics Hilmi Huszein (1887-1940), compiled from Zoltán Bolek's *A magyar iszlám története*. This is what the story of Durics Hilmi Huszein should tell us, that Hungarian Muslims form a part of the Hungarian body.

<sup>24</sup> *The Koran Interpreted* 1998. 664.

<sup>25</sup> GEORGE 2002. 161-186.

## Conclusion

A key finding of the present study was to show that, for Hungarian Muslim women, Islam is a springboard. The members of *Iszlám és a nők* do not seek to be good Muslims (as D. Winchester argues with regard to Muslim converts), but *right* subjects with control over their bodies and that of the community. Ultimately, they display an anxiety about the fragmentation of the individual and the collective bodies. For the body, individual or collective, is elusive and beyond control as post-modernity decentralises ethics and aesthetics. The fascination with Islamic orthopraxy, and with the legal and ethical boundaries it sets, attracts post-modern agents, who attempt, desperately, to get their lives together. As the world seems to fall apart, there is a need for rigour and embodiment because post-modernity seems too chaotic. Both Islam and post-modernity share a taste for post-apocalyptic quest of the safe houses.

In a fragmented post-modern age, framing bodies in religious terms is an attempt to re-situate the body. Re-situating the body uses two strategies. First, re-scheduling through religious time. The moment a body practices religion and law, in particular, it becomes situated in a religious history with a salvation time, coming from a blessed beginning and ending. Second, it is also a spiritual time that elevates the body to a celestial presence with God, through prayer; a religious time with God. Re-situating the body occurs in the space as well. Religious law establishes boundaries and spatial rules for the body: dress, pilgrimage, family laws and forbiddance. This exclusion re-activates a visible notion of the sacred. The post-modern subject looks for a sacred that is embodied while still spiritualised; another paradox of the human condition.

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JOHN EADE\*

## THE CHANGING ROLE OF RAILWAYS IN THE LIFE OF A EUROPEAN PILGRIMAGE SHRINE

**Abstract:** This paper examines the changing role of the railway in the development of one of the most important Roman Catholic shrines – Lourdes in France. During the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century trains were vital in establishing Lourdes' position as a major national and international shrines. Although the expansion of car ownership and tourism after the Second World War have vastly increased, the numbers visiting the shrine, the importance of the railway has declined. This paper examines the changing role played by the railway in the shrine's development, the declining importance of organised pilgrimage groups and the growth of individual choice and the flexibility provided by diverse modes of transport. It concludes with a consideration of the relevance of this case study to the study of pilgrimage and tourism in Europe and beyond.

**Keywords:** pilgrimage, tourism, railways, roads, flying

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### Lourdes: the development of a shrine

In 1858 a local girl, Bernadette Soubirous, experienced a number of visions at a grotto by the river Gave outside the small Pyrenean town of Lourdes. Among the several messages which Bernadette reported after these visions the Roman Catholic Church officials favoured the one which uncannily referred to a dogmatic proclamation made by Pope Pius IX four years previously. In response to Bernadette's question as to who she was, *Aquero* or "that thing" (Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ typically referred to as Our Lady) replied using the local Bigourdan dialect: "Que soy era Immaculada Concepciou" or "I am the Immaculate Conception".

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\* Prof John Eade, University of Roehampton, 80 Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5SL, UK, Migration Research Unit, University College London and Visiting Professor, Dept for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto. Email: J.Eade@roehampton.ac.uk

Yet, what caught the popular imagination was another message concerning a spring Bernadette had uncovered during another of the visions, when Our Lady told her to: "Go and drink at the spring and wash yourself in it".<sup>1</sup> Claims that miraculous cures had occurred at the spring or through the use of " Lourdes water" quickly spread and established the shrine's fame as a national and then an international centre of healing.

Claims concerning the healing powers of " Lourdes water" led to intense debate between the religious and medical professionals associated with the shrine and their secular opponents.<sup>2</sup> The Lourdes authorities moved swiftly to control access to the water by providing taps near the grotto and began to test healing claims through a rigorous process of medical scrutiny. Bathing in the spring water soon became organised and a bathing house for pilgrims was built next to the Medical Bureau where people's claims to be cured were assessed. Yet, Lourdes' rapid development depended on more than debates concerning the authenticity of miraculous cures and struggles between religious and secular elites. The burgeoning "pilgrimage town", which emerged around the shrine, was shaped by the economic and technological changes transforming France more generally.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a wide range of accommodation, shops, restaurants and bars was established to satisfy the diverse tastes of the visitors. Outside of the daily religious routine within the shrine's precincts, such as the masses held at the grotto, the bathing, the afternoon Blessed Sacrament procession and the evening torchlight procession, people were free to browse round the shops and enjoy the company of family and friends in the bars and hotels. Pilgrimage and tourism became intimately linked with the places associated with Bernadette's life both inside the old town of Lourdes and the surrounding countryside attracting people inspired by a range of motives. In other words the most devout could rub shoulders with those who were just curious or even sceptical.

## **The role of the railway**

The railway played a vital role in this mixture of the sacred and secular. During the 1840s and 1850s a national railway network was established by different regional companies. By 1860 the main cities and towns across France had been connected by railway and the capital of the local department – Tarbes – had belatedly joined this expanding network through the arrival of the line from Bordeaux. When the Compagnie de Midi decided to build a line from Toulouse to the expanding resort of Bayonne on the Atlantic coast the rising fame of Lourdes led it to build a southern loop between Tarbes and Pau down to the shrine. In June 1867 the line was completed and a month later the first pilgrimage from Bayonne triumphantly arrived.

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1 LAURENTIN 1979. 60

2 See HARRIS, Ruth 1999, KAUFMAN 2005; CLAVERIE 2009.

In 1872 the new station saw the arrival of a large national pilgrimage for the August Feast of the Assumption and this proved to be the beginning of an annual event, which helped to secure Lourdes' position as the most visited national shrine. The arrival of a Belgian national pilgrimage group two years later also saw the beginnings of Lourdes' role as an international destination. During the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century groups arrived from Germany, Britain, Spain and the United States and by 1914 Ireland had also organised its first national pilgrimage to Lourdes. The British and Irish groups emphasised the ways in which the French railway network was connected to sea-borne traffic. The ferry from Dover to Boulogne provided easy access to the line leading to Paris and then down to southern France. The Irish national pilgrimage used this route for its first visit but then sailed directly from Cork to Bordeaux cutting out the long detour through England and northern France.

The railway was crucial in Lourdes' ability to see off the competition from rival shrines. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century new Catholic shrines were established not only across France but also in other European countries, such as Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy and Portugal. La Salette, for example, had emerged in the Alpine region of western France through similar claims by two children to have had visions of Our Lady in 1846. The organisers of the 1872 French national pilgrimage also took a group to La Salette but its Alpine location made it much more difficult to access than Lourdes. La Salette remained an important national shrine but its lack of a direct railway link prevented it from emulating the national and international success enjoyed by its southern Marian rival. The journey to La Salette remained arduous and time consuming whereas the railway enabled many more people to travel to Lourdes in far larger numbers and in a much shorter time than by road.<sup>3</sup>

The national and international expansion of the railway network was more than an economic and technological process – it instigated crucial social and cultural changes. It increased the flows of people and information through the strict attention to timetables and the close coordination of different elements (engines, carriages, railway staff, customers and goods). It symbolised the triumph of modern rationality, industrial production and technological innovation over tradition and the ways in which isolated communities were brought into close communion with the rapidly expanding towns and cities. Lourdes expressed the triumph of modernity in the close coordination of the groups organised by dioceses, parishes and particular interest groups and arriving mainly by rail. This close coordination depended heavily on two lay confraternities – the Hospitality of Our Lady of Salut worked for the August French National Pilgrimage, while the Hospitality of Our Lady of Lourdes not only provided a highly organised corps of volunteer helpers at the shrine throughout the pilgrimage season but also liaised with the diocesan groups nationally and internationally.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, during the 1860s the journey from Bordeaux to the nearby spa of Bagnères-de-Bigorre took "some thirty-two hours by coach". HARRIS 1999, 24.

The railway played a key role in the growth of Lourdes' international renown as a centre of miraculous healing. The "sick" could be transported in much larger numbers than ever before and many came from hospitals – another expression of the ways in which modern science, technological innovation and hierarchical, rational organisation were combined with traditional modes of caring. Doctors and nurses became important members of the two confraternities and the Medical Bureau, which investigated miraculous claims, was staffed by eminent medical practitioners.

Lourdes also developed into a major tourism centre. Shops, cafes, restaurants and hotels quickly sprung up along the roads leading down to the Sanctuary. Although many shops catered for the interests of visitors as pilgrims through the sale of bottles for 'Lourdes water', rosaries, statues and paintings, for example, some also responded to the demand for touristic diversions. In 1900 a funicular railway was built to enable people to reach the Pic du Jer which overlooked the town and during the inter-war period local charabanc companies provided day trips to the mountain village of Bartrès where Bernadette Soubirous stayed and to such beauty spots as the underground caves at Bétharram and the limestone circles at Gavarnie. The massive sales of postcards by the Lourdes' shops witnessed to the crucial role played by photography in promoting the shrine and the importance of a large female market among the visitors for these and other modern consumer items.<sup>4</sup> The French railway network played a crucial role in bringing these goods to this expanding town and the railway companies benefited from promoting this far-flung town close to the national frontier.<sup>5</sup> Lourdes illustrated the ways in which the flows of goods and people were intertwined and how tourism and pilgrimage could be mutually supportive.

## Organised pilgrimages and the railway

The organised pilgrimages such as the massive French National Pilgrimage and the Rosary pilgrimage, which came in early October and was the last major group of the season, had long caught the imagination of a number of writers. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century French and Italian authors, in particular, vividly described some of these journeys for an increasingly literate population and the ways in which "sick" pilgrims were looked after. The controversial French scientist, Alexis Carrel, for example, recounted his journey with the French National Pilgrimage from Paris in 1903 and the cramped conditions which the 'sick' endured in the ill equipped, stifling carriages.<sup>6</sup> 1903 also saw the formation of the voluntary

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4 See KAUFMAN 2005.

5 See READER 2014. 65.

6 CARREL 1949.

organisation, UNITALSI<sup>7</sup> which commissioned “white trains” to transport “sick” and able pilgrims to the French shrine.

British and Irish organised groups also began to make their way to Lourdes by boat and train from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and a number of accounts were made of these journeys. A recent reflection of one such journey was provided by Matthew, a highly experienced member of the Hospitality of Our Lady of Lourdes.<sup>8</sup> He made his first trip with a diocesan youth group in 1968, which travelled from the north-east of England to London’s Victoria train station by twelve coaches and then boarded a chartered train for the port of Folkestone. The Channel ferry took them to Boulogne where they met another English diocesan group, which had chartered a train to Lourdes with their ‘sick’ pilgrims. The over-night journey took them across France and by lunch time they arrived in Bordeaux.

This gave people a chance to get off the train to stretch their legs while the water tanks on the train were being replenished and water was being obtained for the lunchtime tea run. This relieved some of the boredom of the journey as well as relieving the feeling of cabin fever, as this was before the time of any portable entertainment systems. Following the lunchtime tea run there was an increased feeling of anticipation as everyone began preparing for their arrival in Lourdes. As the train got closer the state of excitement was rising as was waiting for their first sight of the steeple of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, known as the Upper Basilica. Everyone was saying repeatedly, “It is just around the next corner.” Once the steeple came into view followed by the sight of the Grotto, the whole train broke into Ave, Ave, Ave Maria, the chorus of The Lourdes Hymn. From the train pilgrims were shepherded to coaches that would take them to their hotels, with little time to relax before meeting up at the Crowned Virgin for the opening ceremony of the Pilgrimage and the opening mass.

Significantly, the “sick” pilgrims from his diocese had flown to the small local airport the day before – a process that would gather pace from the 1970s and leads us on to the next section of this chapter.

## **Changes in transport and the decline of organised pilgrimages**

Although the railway had played a key role in Lourdes’ rise to fame during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, its contribution declined in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a period which saw a spectacular increase in visitor numbers. Between 1866 and 1946 annual visitor numbers averaged a quarter of a million, although in 1883 (the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bernadette’s visions) around half a million reportedly arrived. However, in 1949 (a Holy Year)

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<sup>7</sup> Unione Nazionale Italiana Ammalati a Lourdes e Santiari Internazionali/Italian National Union of the Sick to Lourdes and International Sanctuaries.

<sup>8</sup> In 2013 I returned to Lourdes after a twenty-one-year break and after meeting Matthew and other veterans, who had continued to serve there during that break, I invited them to reflect on the ways in which the journeys and the shrine had changed over the years.

almost two and a half million people came to Lourdes and although annual numbers fluctuated considerably thereafter, numbers continue to increase overall and reached their highest level in 2008 – the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions - when nine million were recorded. Numbers fell back subsequently and had dropped to 5,800,000 by 2012 (the latest official figure). It would appear that this dramatic increase was largely due to the development of other modes of transport with the steady rise in car ownership,<sup>9</sup> the improvement in France's road network, the rising popularity of walking tours and the development of low cost flights. The proportion of people coming in organised groups by train has declined while the number of those arriving by road either as individuals or with friends and relatives has massively increased.

The move away from rail travel among organised pilgrimages from England, for example, was well described by Patrick, another regular volunteer and member of the Hospitality of Our Lady of Lourdes, who first came to Lourdes in 1990:

“There were conspicuously fewer pilgrims around in the summer of 2014 than I've ever seen before and the number of trains which halved between 2002 and 2012 continues to fall. Taking Britain as an example, in [the early 1990s] Hexham and Newcastle, Salford, Shrewsbury, Nottingham, Liverpool and Arundel and Brighton all travelled down by train. The Welsh National Pilgrimage have also used the train in the past. Now only Shrewsbury and Arundel and Brighton arrive at Lourdes railway station and even then, Shrewsbury fly most of their sick out.

There are fewer pilgrimages arriving and those that continue to come are a lot smaller than they were. SNCF are imposing restrictions on the times a train can travel and this is already having effects. Some groups are coming by coach instead which means that Lourdes is becoming a pilgrimage for the sick but it's increasingly difficult for the sick to be able to get there. It's an expensive place to get to [...] The days when the number of sick passing through the railway station could get up to nearly two thousand are gone and I'm unlikely to see a day when trains number two figures for a day.”

The leaders of the Hospitality echoed Patrick's view. The March 2014 edition of *Sanctuary* carried a report where they bemoaned the decline of special trains and its contribution to the falling numbers of 'people with reduced mobility.'<sup>10</sup> Between 2001 and 2013 the number of special trains had fallen from 500 to 250, while those categorised as “sick pilgrim” had fallen from 65,000 to 50,000 during the same period. The March 2014 letter claimed that all interest groups should

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<sup>9</sup> The number of cars on France's roads rose from 2,500,000 in 1950 to almost 30,000,000 by 2005. See P. GANDIL 2005.

<sup>10</sup> [http://fr.lourdes-france.org/sites/default/files/pdf/hndl/lettre\\_35\\_hndl\\_en.pdf](http://fr.lourdes-france.org/sites/default/files/pdf/hndl/lettre_35_hndl_en.pdf) Accessed on 06 January 2016.



think about how to respond to this decline including the transport network “who at one time signed agreements and put forward some development proposals [...] who knows what became of them.”<sup>11</sup> The urgency of the situation was compounded by the future opening of the network to competition and ‘the liberalisation of rail transport’ by 2019 at the latest according to an EU directive.

### **Increasing diversity in modes of transport and visitors to Lourdes**

The massive increase in visitor numbers to this small town near France’s southern, mountainous border after the Second World War reflected general socio-economic transformations across Europe and the associated diversification in and growth of mobility. The shrine at Lourdes continued to attract a hard core of committed Roman Catholics attached to highly organised pilgrimage groups but a vast and highly diverse penumbra surrounded this hard core. Although those intimately involved in the shrine described those comprising this penumbra as “tourists”, the situation was far more complicated since these visitors appeared to range from those connected with the organised groups but spending only a short time in Lourdes and not closely involved in the groups’ activities to those who were passing through on the way to the mountains or the seaside, for example. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Lourdes catered for a wide range of visitors and was no longer dominated by the organised pilgrimages. Furthermore, although the shrine’s ritual life was firmly tied to the Roman Catholic Church, those belonging to other faiths (Protestant, Orthodox, Hindu and Buddhist) were also drawn to the shrine, reflecting the growth of cultural diversity shaped by global migration.

Although car ownership and the improving road network contributed heavily to the massive increase in visitor numbers after the Second World War, the growth of low cost flights also played a part and was clearly reflected in the expansion of the local airport. When I first began to work as a helper at Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées airport during the 1970s, it handled very little traffic. International flights were few and far between and while some organised pilgrimages, such as the English one described earlier, were using it by the late 1960s, most people on these pilgrimages still relied heavily on the train. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the airport had been transformed. The small terminal had been replaced by a spacious hall for arrivals and departures while the narrow road outside had given way to a wide double-lane avenue leading to a large parking area for cars and coaches. A few destinations were connected by regular flights but the airport came alive during the summer pilgrimage season with the arrival and departure of charter flights from Europe and further afield. Travel agencies played a key role in the operation of these charter flights with the airport’s website listing 51 from 12 European countries (Italy alone accounted for 17 of these agencies).

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

The airport did not just rely on the travel and tourist trade, however, since it also hosted a light aircraft factory and, as a cluster of large aeroplanes parked on the airport perimeter, an international aeroplane service operation.<sup>12</sup>

The increasing importance of the airport in Lourdes' fortunes is well illustrated by the career of one of the town's remarkable entrepreneurs. Pierre Ferron (not his real name) was born in the Midi town of Carcassonne during 1941 but was brought up in Lourdes where his father ran a cafe near the station. Pierre became fascinated by the work of the station and the part played by Hospitality volunteers in helping people on and off the trains:

"From the age of six I was watching the voluntary workers who were helping in the [station's] St Martha's Hall where the buses arrived, often during the night and in the early morning. The members of the Hospitality came mainly from the nobility or the upper bourgeoisie. I considered them as the 'servants of God', nobles in the full sense of the term."<sup>13</sup>

In 1958, at the age of 17, he joined the Hospitality and worked with these 'nobles' as a helper at the station. However, he also became interested in the developing airport and in 1968 he started working there as a helper and he eventually became responsible for organising the teams of Hospitality workers, who enabled those with limited mobility to enter and exit the planes. (I joined one of these teams during my first period as a Hospitality member between 1967 and 1992). He forged close links with British, Dutch and Irish pilgrimage groups, in particular, and took advantage of technological innovations to make the process of entering and leaving the plane safer and more efficient for those with limited mobility. As the number of charter planes arriving increased so did the range of Pierre Ferron's networks and this benefitted his expanding hotel business in Lourdes itself.

In 2013 when I returned to work as a Hospitality helper after a twenty one year break, he was still organising teams for the airport while managing a three star hotel in the pilgrimage town near the sanctuary. It is tempting but too simple to see him as a businessman who was exploiting his shrine connections to his commercial advantage. His involvement in the life of the shrine was personal, even if he did benefit commercially from that personal involvement. Like other single stranded interpretations of what was happening in Lourdes, to interpret his career in terms of rational calculation, and business strategy, would miss the complexity of beliefs and practices in which Pierre was involved.

While the development of the local airport has clearly illustrated the increasing importance of flights as an alternative to the railway, improving access to Lourdes by road was probably even more important. During the pilgrimage season the main road, which forms a loop from the old town down to the Sanctuary and back up again, is busy with cars, camper vans, coaches and lorries, as well as

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12 <http://www.tarmacaerosave.aero/index.php?lang=en>) Accessed on 06 January 2016.

13 Hommage a notre ami Jean, *Hospitalite Diocesaine Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, No. 65, March 2013.

the Disney-style *petit train* (see picture 1). Camp sites outside the town have expanded to provide a cheap alternative to Lourdes' hotels and to relieve pressure on its parking spaces. The gradual improvement of France's roads after the Second World War strengthened a national network, which linked up with similarly improving road systems in other W. European countries. As well as free access to the *Route Nationale* network, drivers could use the expanding toll *autoroutes* (motorways), which increased from 1,500 kilometres by the late 1960s to over 11,500 kilometres by 2005.<sup>14</sup> Increasing mobility and flexibility encouraged people to visit Lourdes for a day or two and even for a few hours rather than be tied down by train timetables and flight schedules.

The Sanctuary's officials were well aware of the challenge posed by the increasing flexibility brought by the changes outlined above. Between 2012 and 2013 they carefully reviewed the organisation of the Sanctuary and the challenges it was facing and the new bishop, Monseigneur Brouwet, reflected on those challenges and how to respond to them in "*Au service de la joie des convives*" *Orientations pour le Sanctuaire de Lourdes* (Serving the joy of the guests. Guidance for the Lourdes Sanctuary). He urged those working at the shrine to think about how to engage the vast penumbra outside the core of the organised pilgrimages:

"We must continue to welcome those who come on organised pilgrimages. But we must reflect in a new way about how to welcome those who come as individuals; in particular those who arrive in Lourdes without knowing what they will find there nor how they are going to spend their few hours or days at the Massabielle Grotto.

(Nous devons continuer à accueillir ceux qui viennent en pèlerinage organisé. Mais nous devons réfléchir de manière nouvelle à l'accueil de ceux qui viennent individuellement; en particulier ceux qui arrivent à Lourdes sans savoir ni ce qu'ils vont y trouver, ni comment ils vont vivre ces quelques heures ou ces quelques jours à la Grotte de Massabielle)."<sup>15</sup>

Given the changes outlined above as well as the rapid decline in congregational worship and religious vocations across France and other W. European nations, the bishop and his colleagues faced a formidable task.

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<sup>14</sup> See GANDIL 2005.

<sup>15</sup> <http://fr.lourdes-france.org/evenement/orientations-pour-le-sanctuaire> Accessed on 06 January 2016.

## Conclusion

The railways have played a crucial role in the development of Lourdes as France's most popular pilgrimage shrine, despite stiff competition from such other celebrated sites as Lisiuex, Mont St Michel, Rocamadour and the Rue du Bac in Paris. However, the railway has declined in importance since the 1960s as car ownership has rapidly expanded and cheap air flights have encouraged the development of the local airport. Although the number of visitors has risen dramatically – from two and a half million in 1948 to the nine million peak of 2008 – the majority are independent of any organised pilgrimage group.

The decline of the railway's importance had also important implications for Lourdes' role as a healing shrine, where the "*malades et handicapés*" (sick and handicapped) played a central role. The rapid decline in the number of special trains between 2001 and 2013 had played a large part in the fall of 'sick pilgrims' from 65,000 to 50,000. Specially equipped coaches brought some of these pilgrims by road and others arrived by plane but these alternatives had not prevented this decline. Lourdes was in danger of losing its historic role as a place which welcomed the chronically ill with the hope of miraculous healing.

Looked at within the wider European context the changes affecting this particular Roman Catholic shrine have lessons for the study of pilgrimage, in general. Reference has been repeatedly made to the popularity of such major Marian shrines as Częstochowa, Máriapócs, Altötting, Loreto, Banneux, Lourdes, Fatima and Knock and the dramatic rise of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>16</sup> However, the analysis of the diverse reasons people have for visiting these and other less renowned, more local shrines has been limited and the tendency has been to use the popular distinction between pilgrims and tourists, which fails to acknowledge the complexity of people's motives and the mutual dependency of religious and non-religious institutions. Ethnographic research has been dominated by an essentialist perspective which encourages anthropologists, in particular, to dismiss the kinds of flows discussed here as either secondary or irrelevant.

Yet the limitations of this essentialist perspective are being increasingly exposed by the growing literature concerning the complexity of people's motives and the relationship between religious and non-religious institutions.<sup>17</sup> Hybrid terms such as religious tourism have also been deployed to understand the intersection of different actors, institutions and processes, while a body of research is emerging on more open forms of pilgrimage.<sup>18</sup>

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16 The shrine has still to be officially recognised by the Vatican.

17 See, for example, ROSEMAN – BADONE 2004; TIMOTHY – OLSEN 2006; COLLINS-KREINER 2010, READER 2014.

18 See, for example, studies of the route to Santiago de Compostela by FREY 1998; GONZALEZ 2013; SÁNCHEZ Y SÁNCHEZ – HESP 2015, as well as the explorations by BOWMAN 2000, WEIBEL 2005; FEDELE 2012 of "spiritual" and other alternative forms of pilgrimage.

This paper seeks to contribute to this literature by highlighting the significant part played by changing modes of transport in the life of this highly popular Marian shrine. Hopefully, similar studies across Europe will help to produce a more holistic approach towards pilgrimage in the region and forge links with other studies on changing mobilities and cultural processes beyond Europe.

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Lourdes 1953 gavnarnie  
Copyright: Jim Taylor



Patricia Wilkinson on the way home, 1971  
Copyright: Jim Taylor





Waiting for the train to come in, 1973  
Copyright: Jim Taylor



Loading the aircraft at Newcastle Airport (Michael Johnson & Alan Archer), 1970s  
Copyright: Jim Taylor

## RAILWAYS, RIVALRY AND THE REVIVAL OF PILGRIMAGE IN GLASTONBURY, 1895 AND 1897

**Abstract:** The coming of the railway to Glastonbury, England, enabled the resumption of large scale, formal pilgrimage to Glastonbury after a gap of over 300 years. First, in 1895 Catholic pilgrims were able to travel from all over Britain to celebrate the beatification of the Glastonbury Catholic Martyrs Whiting, Thorne and James. Then, in 1897, the railway brought an unprecedented number of pilgrims and sightseers to Glastonbury for what was hailed as an 'international pilgrimage' organised by the Anglican Church. This paper examines the crucial role of railways in the revival of pilgrimage to and within Glastonbury, and the importance of both the 1895 and 1897 pilgrimages in staking competing claims on Glastonbury's history and significance – contestation which continues until the present day.

**Keywords:** Glastonbury; pilgrimage; Somerset and Dorset Railway; procession; Glastonbury Abbey; Glastonbury Tor; Glastonbury Pilgrimage 1895; Glastonbury Pilgrimage 1897; Abbot Richard Whiting; railways.

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### Introduction

In this article I examine the significant role of the railways in the late nineteenth century in helping to re-establish the town of Glastonbury, England, as a pilgrimage destination. The Somerset Central Railway (from 1862 known as the Somerset

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\* Marion Bowman, Religious Studies, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK. Email: marion.bowman@open.ac.uk

and Dorset Railway after a merger) enabled two large scale pilgrimages to Glastonbury, one in 1895 the other in 1897, which were to revive pilgrimage to the town after a break of over 300 years. These events in turn contributed to Glastonbury's contemporary status as a multivalent pilgrimage site, where processions give physical expression to the claims on and contestation of the site until this day.<sup>1</sup>



St Joseph of Arimathea depicted in window  
of St. John's Church (Anglican), Glastonbury.  
Photograph: Marion Bowman

In the Middle Ages Glastonbury, in the Somerset Levels of southwest England, had been one of England's most significant pilgrimage destinations. Glastonbury claimed to be the earliest site of Christianity in England, allegedly missionized by St. Joseph of Arimathea.<sup>2</sup> He was (and still is) believed by many to have brought with him two cruets, containing the blood and sweat of Christ, or the chalice used at the Last Supper, also known as the Holy Grail.<sup>3</sup> On arrival on Wearyall Hill in Glastonbury, Joseph reputedly thrust his staff into the ground and it became the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury, famed for flowering both in springtime and around Christmas.<sup>4</sup> This myth of early, 'pure', pre-Catholic Christianity rooted in England was and remains immensely significant.

1 BOWMAN 1993; 2004; 2005; 2008; 2015.

2 CRAWFORD 1993; 1994.

3 For an excellent summary of these traditions see CARLEY 1996.

4 VICKERY 1979; BOWMAN 2006.





Allegedly built on the site of Joseph's early church, medieval Glastonbury Abbey was a great centre of Marian devotion<sup>5</sup> and a major pilgrimage site, with a magnificent library and a huge collection of relics, which allegedly included the bones of King Arthur.<sup>6</sup> However, at the time of the Reformation, in 1539, the Abbey was brutally dissolved. Abbot Richard Whiting and two monks, John Thorne and Roger James, were dragged through the streets of Glastonbury on 15 November 1539, and hanged on Glastonbury Tor (the distinctively shaped hill which dominates the local landscape) as traitors, for resisting the suppression of their house. The Abbey and its grounds passed into private ownership, and by the late nineteenth century the Abbey ruins were merely picturesque features in the garden of Abbey House.

Abbot Richard Whiting depicted with Glastonbury Tor in the background, St Mary's Church (Catholic) Glastonbury.  
Photograph: Marion Bowman



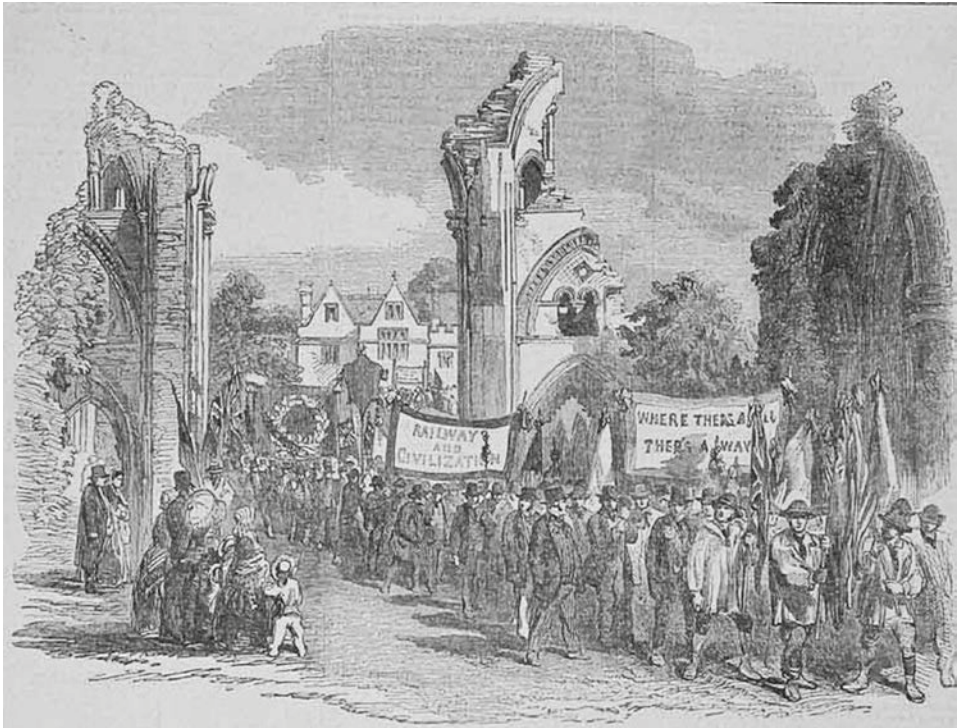
Abbey House (built in 1830, now an Anglican retreat house) with the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey in the foreground. Photograph Marion Bowman.

<sup>5</sup> HOPKINSON-BALL 2012.

<sup>6</sup> CARLEY 1996.

## The Coming of the Railway

Perhaps we tend to forget what an immensely big event the coming of the railway could be for a town, enabling people and goods to travel greater distances less arduously and more speedily, linking it to many hitherto remote places. When the Glastonbury branch of the Somerset Central Railway was opened in 1854, a great celebratory procession was held in the town. The *Illustrated London News* of 26 August 1854 depicted the scene in a sketch entitled 'The opening of the Somerset Central Railway' showing the procession wending its way through the Abbey grounds, with participants carrying flags and banners proclaiming WHERE THERE'S A RAIL THERE'S A WAY (a pun on the English proverb 'where there's a will there's a way') and RAILWAY AND CIVILISATION.



Sketch of celebrations in Glastonbury on the opening of the Central Somerset Railway. By Unknown engraver (*Illustrated London News* 20 August 1854), via Wikimedia Commons  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Opening\\_of\\_Somerset\\_Ctl\\_Rly.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Opening_of_Somerset_Ctl_Rly.jpg)

This railway provided the crucial infrastructure both for the 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage and then the 1897 Anglican Pilgrimage to Glastonbury.

## The 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage: Context

The 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage was focussed specifically on the beatification by Pope Leo XIII of the three Glastonbury Martyrs Whiting, Thorne and James in May 1895. As Giles Mercer puts it, "The Glastonbury Pilgrimage of 12 September 1895 was among the first, large-scale, legal, outdoor, public Catholic events in England since the Reformation and the first in the South West".<sup>7</sup>

The 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage to Glastonbury needs to be seen in the broader context of English Catholicism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> This was a time of testing and pushing the boundaries of Catholic emancipation and toleration. In June 1895 the foundation stone was laid of Westminster Cathedral, London, the mother church of English and Welsh Catholics. Catholic pilgrimage in England was developing as a public display of devotion, strength and developing confidence. By the 1890s the Catholic Church was increasingly interested in both spiritually, and as far as possible physically, reclaiming or at least re-establishing links with Glastonbury, Walsingham and Canterbury, the three great shrines of pre-reformation Catholic England. Moreover, by then English Catholics were travelling abroad in increasing numbers to Jerusalem, Rome, Lourdes, Loreto and elsewhere: "The railway age was enabling pilgrimages at home and abroad to influence and gain strength from one another".<sup>9</sup>

Pope Leo XIII was sympathetic to the English Catholic Church in its attempts to restore its role and legitimacy in public life and religious affairs, and to counter the claims of the Anglican Church to be in continuity with, and be the true successor of, the pre-Reformation church in England. English Benedictines Dom Francis Aidan Gasquet and Dom Bede Camm actively promoted interest in and devotion to English Catholic Martyrs, arguing that Anglican protestations of "continuity" were undermined by the history of Catholic martyrs such as Whiting, Thorne and James, who died defending communion with Rome. Gasquet's popular book *The Last Abbot of Glastonbury and His Companions: An Historical Sketch* appeared early in 1895, in anticipation of the announcement of the beatifications of the three Glastonbury martyrs, to reinforce awareness of the martyrs' story.

The main figures in the organisation of the 1895 Pilgrimage were Prior Ford of Downside,<sup>10</sup> and Bishop Brownlow, Catholic Bishop of Clifton in Bristol, a former Anglican cleric. The pilgrimage in honour of the beatified Glastonbury martyrs on Thursday September 15, 1895 was timed to be the climax of the annual meeting of the Catholic Truth Society (CTS), held that year in Bristol.

In August Bishop Brownlow sent out a Pastoral Letter to be read in "all Churches and Chapels" in the Diocese on August 11 to advertise the Pilgrimage

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<sup>7</sup> MERCER 2012. 79.

<sup>8</sup> See MERCER 2012; CORIO 2014.

<sup>9</sup> MERCER 2012. 82.

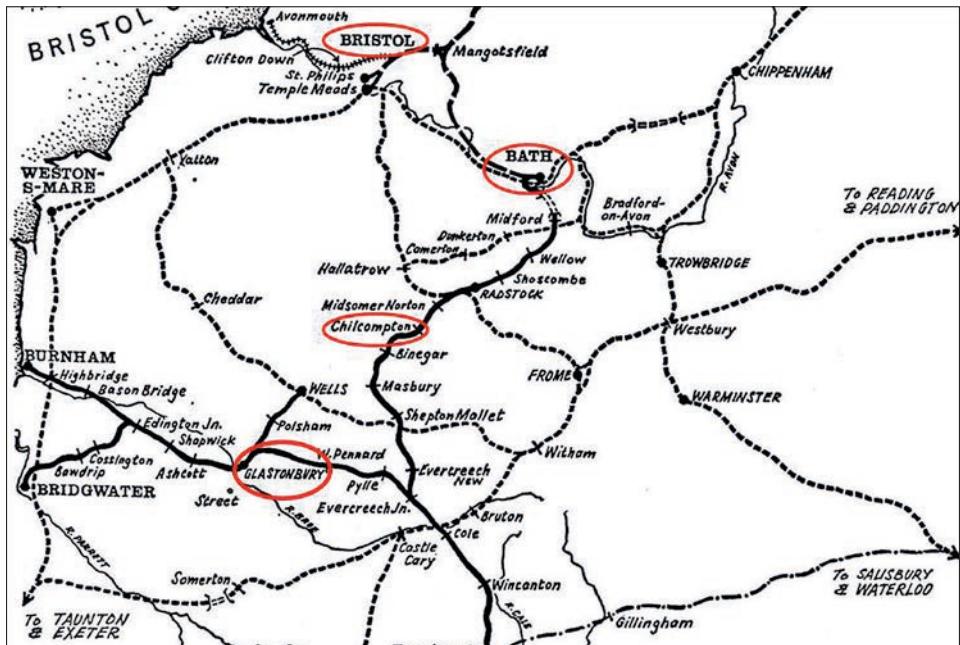
<sup>10</sup> Downside, the Benedictine Abbey close to Glastonbury begun in 1872, regarded by some as the "new Glastonbury". See BELLENGER 2011.



and explain its significance, granting an “Indulgence of Forty Days applicable to the souls in purgatory, to all those, who after Confession and Communion, take part in this Pilgrimage”.<sup>11</sup>

## The 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage: Logistics

A very detailed double-sided leaflet entitled *Directions for the Pilgrims* was produced, informing them of Somerset and Dorset, Great Western Railway and Midland Railway trains they might use for travel to Glastonbury on September 15, 1895. However, a ‘special’ (a privately chartered train) was to leave Bath at 1.30, calling at Chilcompton at 2.05, and arriving at Glastonbury at 2.55. All pilgrims were advised to be at Glastonbury station for 3 p.m., as the Pilgrimage procession would form up and start from there. A mobile vestry was arranged for the clergy on the special train. According to *Directions for the Pilgrims*: “A saloon carriage will be reserved for the clergy, marked ‘Engaged,’ in which they can vest, and in which they can leave hand-bags, umbrellas, etc, at Glastonbury under charge of the guard.” The train journey itself was to be a devotional experience, as the *Directions* section on Devotions made clear:



Railway map with places relevant to 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage circled in red.

11 MERCER 2012. 89.



"1. On leaving the first railway station, one person in each compartment should recite the Litany BVM, the others answering.

2. Between Chilcompton and Evercreech, the Litany of the Saints.

3. Between Evercreech and Glastonbury, the Te Deum."

These instructions also appeared in Catholic publication *The Tablet*.<sup>12</sup>

On the morning of 12 September, 1895, some delegates attending the Catholic Truth Society meeting signed up for a visit to Prior Park College in Bath, run by Christian Brothers. Bishop Brownlow and around 200 delegates, meanwhile, took the 9.35 train from Bristol to Chilcompton, in order to visit nearby Downside Abbey, where they were welcomed by Prior Ford. According to the account in the local newspaper, *West of England Advertiser*, Bishop Browning gave a short address there in which he reminded his hearers that "a pilgrimage was a pious journey, and they were all asked to join in the prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary asking for success, and they hoped the arrangements that had been made would be carried out".<sup>13</sup> He warned that

"A pilgrimage was not a party of pleasure, and they must be prepared for some of the inconveniences: but let them take them as pilgrims through a land which once knew their holy religion, and had now forsaken or forgotten it. They must not be surprised if there was irritation caused by their reminding their fellow Protestant countrymen of what once occurred. He understood that the people of Glastonbury were especially bigoted against the Catholics [...] and they must not be surprised if they met with some slight opposition on the part of the inhabitants. He believed that there had been some difficulties made about their going to the Tor, but they would be told at the station whether it would be possible to go through with the procession. If they were interfered with, they must suffer it, and even if they had stones thrown at them, they must act like true pilgrims and put up with it."<sup>14</sup>

This was not simply dramatic rhetoric; they truly did not know quite what to expect on arrival in Glastonbury. After lunching at Downside, the Bishop and his party walked back to the station at Chilcompton to join the special pilgrimage train, fifteen coaches long and hauled by two engines, which had left Bath at 1.30 and arrived at 2.00 p.m. already "well filled".<sup>15</sup> While pilgrims in each compartment attempted to recite the appropriate prayers on the journey to Glastonbury, there are some indications that this was rather difficult due to the packed nature of the train, with many even standing in the guard's van. The special train arrived at Glastonbury around 3.00p.m.

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<sup>12</sup> 7/9/1895; see <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/7th-september-1895/27/glastonbury-pilgrimage-thursday-september-12-1895>

<sup>13</sup> *West of England Advertiser* 19/9/1895.

<sup>14</sup> *West of England Advertiser* 19/9/1895.

<sup>15</sup> *West of England Advertiser* 19/9/1895.

Simultaneously, according to the *Central Somerset Gazette*, there was already considerable activity at Glastonbury station:

"Before the arrival of this train, a large number of people from Wells were brought in by a special train, and these were increased by additions brought by road and rail from all parts of the county. In the meantime, four Franciscan Friars of the Observance from Clevedon, in brown habit and cowl, sandals, and tonsure, had arrived, and marched up and down the station platform silently reciting their prayers [...] Nineteen choirboys from Clevedon accompanied the Friars, and, after vain attempts to secure a private room at the station in which to robe, they put on their cassocks and surplices at the end of the platform; a number of banners were unfurled and the nucleus of the procession was formed in the station yard before the arrival of the main body of pilgrims. A goodly number of Catholics from various places in the district also awaited at the station the arrival of the special train, being distinguished by the wearing of yellow and white favours [papal colours] [...]

At last, about 3 o'clock, the train steamed into the station, bringing nearly 1,000 pilgrims. The station was at once transformed, and became crowded with strange travellers, giving one the impression of a continental railway station during gala-time. The scene was thoroughly un-English in some aspects."<sup>16</sup>



1895 Catholic Pilgrimage Procession setting out from the station. Photograph from Remembering St. Louis website: <http://www.stlouisconvent.co.uk/pilg.html>

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<sup>16</sup> *Central Somerset Gazette* 14/9/1895.



the steep slopes of the Tor, where it halted while hymns were sung and three short addresses made to the crowds by Dom Benedict Snow (Titular Abbot of Glastonbury), Fr Philip Fletcher (master of the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom, founded in 1887, to work for the conversion of England) and Prior Ford. The address by Abbot Snow was very fully reported in both the local newspapers<sup>18</sup> and *The Tablet*.<sup>19</sup> Snow reminded the crowd that “there was no spot in the island which showed more completely the continuity of the Catholic faith than the hallowed ground which was around them”. He took them through the various saints and historical events connected with Glastonbury, culminating in the martyrdom of Abbot Whiting and his two monks.

“You have come here to-day to this very spot to vindicate the blood of the martyrs. On the testimony of the Vicar of Christ you have come to proclaim that his [Whiting’s] was not a felon’s death, that it was no mere political execution, but that it was a true martyrdom, that it was the greatest of heroic acts by which a man giveth his life for his faith and his God. You have come to proclaim that this ignominy was an honour, that his life was illustrious, that his death was a passage into a glorious life. You come to thank God, who is wonderful in His saints, for the constancy, fortitude, and love of the blessed martyr. You come, too, to ask his intercession who has been declared to belong to the white-robed army of martyrs in the kingdom of heaven. You are the first to come to the place of his martyrdom to vindicate his shame and ignominy, and you may seek his intercession with confidence. Look down, then, Blessed Richard, on this place of thy triumph, upon this thy family gathered together in thy name, and obtain for us some of that constancy and firmness of faith that led to thy crown [...] Look down upon this our country, your country, and obtain from the God of peace that we may be again united in faith, and that England may be one Catholic nation, as in the days when you were blessed as the Abbot of Glastonbury”.<sup>20</sup>

The pilgrim procession then regrouped for a final ascent to the top of the Tor, in front of the ruins of St Michael’s church, the site of the martyrdom of Abbot Richard Whiting & monks John Thorne and Roger James.

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18 *West of England Advertiser* 19/9/1895 and *Central Somerset Gazette* 21/9/1895.

19 *The Tablet* 21/9/1895; see <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/21st-september-1895/22/the-pilgrimage-to-glastonbury>

20 *The Tablet*, 21/9/1895.





Glastonbury Tor, with the tower of ruined St Michael's church visible. Photograph Marion Bowman.

At a temporary altar erected there, Bishop Browning prayed that the faith for which Blessed Richard had died should once more be granted to England, and the pilgrims sang *Faith of Our Fathers* and recited the prayer for the conversion of England, which includes:

"O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England, Thy Dowry, and upon all of us who greatly hope and trust in Thee. Intercede for our separated brethren that in the one true fold we may all be united under the chief shepherd of Christ's flock, and that by faith and fruitful in good works we may all deserve to see and praise God together with Thee in our heavenly home."

Bishop Browning then gave a blessing, using a relic of the Holy Cross claimed to have belonged once to Glastonbury Abbey. As *The Tablet* reported enthusiastically

"It was, of course, impossible for the procession to return in anything like definite order, but it poured down the hill in one unbroken stream, which flowed from the tower on the summit along the spur to the College at the foot. Viewed from this spot, nothing could well be more inspiring. In the midst of the surging crowd could be seen the mitre and crozier of the Bishop, and the red vestments of the

sacred ministers; laity and clergy, were mingled together without distinction, and priests and religious in cassock and habit might be seen assisting the more feeble of the pilgrims down the steeper portions of the hill. Never did the hymns already so frequently sung by the pilgrims sound with greater effect than during the return of the procession [...] Just before the foot of the hill was reached, by happy inspiration, the pilgrims spontaneously began to sing the first verse of 'God Save the Queen.' This was taken up by whole immense multitude with startling effect. Thus ended the spiritual portion of the pilgrimage."<sup>21</sup>

Hundreds who had obtained tickets in advance had tea in the grounds of the Catholic College of the Sacred Heart at the foot of the Tor, but eventually the crowds made their way to Glastonbury station

"where again the remarkable sight might be witnessed of two very lengthy special trains, each drawn by two engines and extending far beyond the platforms of the station, to which priests in cassock or habit were directing the now weary steps of the returning pilgrims. As was remarked by more than one person, it looked as if Glastonbury were once more in the midst of a Catholic country."<sup>22</sup>

Numbers for the Catholic Pilgrimage are extremely hard to pin down, as estimates vary between around 1,500 – probably based on the numbers starting at the station – and 4,000 in the latter part of the Pilgrimage.<sup>23</sup> Despite the fears expressed by Bishop Browning, "no one could complain of the spectators, who maintained a respectful demeanour while the pilgrims wended their way through the streets of the town".<sup>24</sup> Indeed, many spectators appear to have joined the procession when it climbed the Tor. Bishop Browning subsequently had a letter published in which he expressed grateful thanks to the people of Glastonbury "*for the courteous and even respectful reception that they gave to us.*" He had heard that some had been hurt by his words to the pilgrims at Downside

"I confess that I thought it possible that some hostile demonstration might have been made, and considered it my duty to warn the ardent and more muscular of my audience against the temptation to retaliate. The good sense and courtesy of the Glastonbury folk

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<sup>21</sup> *The Tablet*, 21/9/1895. See: <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/21st-september-1895/22/the-pilgrimage-to-glastonbury>

<sup>22</sup> *The Tablet*, 21/9/1895. See: <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/21st-september-1895/22/the-pilgrimage-to-glastonbury>

<sup>23</sup> The *Central Somerset Gazette* (14/9/1895) commented that "The scene on the Tor was imposing in the extreme, three or four thousand people forming the procession down the hill."

<sup>24</sup> *West of England Advertiser* 19/9/1895.

showed that my remarks were quite unnecessary, and I hope they will forgive me for having so misjudged them."<sup>25</sup>

Mercer claims that

"what had brought about the triumphant success of the 1895 Pilgrimage was the energetic bringing together of various elements: a Papacy which strongly supported English Catholics through honouring their martyrs and through other areas; greater Catholic public confidence, hand-in-hand with a softening of public opinion towards the Catholic Church; a revived monasticism and religious life [...]; a deeper and better-informed Catholic historical scholarship; and a Europe-wide renewal of pilgrimages and veneration of shrines."<sup>26</sup>

In addition, however, the railway's role in enabling the organisers to bring together such crowds at Glastonbury was crucial. The pilgrimage was judged a great success by all, but in fact it was to become just the opening salvo in relation to the revival of Pilgrimage in Glastonbury and the use of the procession to assert claims over that contested site.

## **The 1897 Anglican Pilgrimage: Retaliation**

1897 was the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, marked on 22 June by many celebrations and immense numbers of visiting foreign dignitaries. In 1897 there were also many great ecclesiastical celebrations to mark the 1300th anniversary of the arrival of St Augustine in Kent in 597, the year generally considered to mark the founding of the English Church.

While there was no chance of a Catholic celebration in Canterbury Cathedral, a Catholic pilgrimage was organised to Ebbsfleet in Kent, the site where St Augustine and his monastic companions landed, on 14 September 1897. As with the Glastonbury Pilgrimage, the anniversary celebrations at Ebbsfleet were combined with the annual conference of the Catholic Truth Society, which that year met at Ramsgate in Kent.

However, the most significant 1300th anniversary celebrations were organised by the Anglican Church, and took place at Canterbury Cathedral on July 2 1897, timed to coincide with the start of the Lambeth Conference, the great gathering of the Archbishops and Bishops of the worldwide Anglican Communion normally held every ten years.<sup>27</sup> An outing to Ebbsfleet had been organised in relation

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<sup>25</sup> *West of England Advertiser* 21/9/1895.

<sup>26</sup> MERCER 2012. 106.

<sup>27</sup> The Lambeth Conference was moved out of sequence in order to accommodate the 1300th anniversary celebrations.



to this. A special train run by the South Eastern Railway collected the cathedral clergy and choir at Canterbury, delivering them to a temporary platform which was built at Ebbsfleet for first class passengers, although second class passengers had to alight at Minster-in-Thanet and walk the remaining 2.3 miles. After an act of worship at Ebbsfleet, the party visited the Roman remains at Richborough, and took tea there. The bishops then travelled back to Canterbury to be ready for the opening service of the conference on the following day.<sup>28</sup>

Also in 1897, an Anglican "International Pilgrimage" to Glastonbury was staged, the brainchild of the Anglican Bishop of Bath and Wells, George Kennion (a former Bishop of Adelaide). In 1896 he issued a letter of invitation to Bishops intending to attend the Lambeth Conference. Noting that much attention would be directed to the founding of the English church through the arrival of St Augustine in Kent in AD 597, the Bishop continued

"To some of us it appears worthwhile to draw attention to the existence of the British Church in these islands before the arrival of St Augustine and his companions, and to the connection of the Church of England with that church, and through it with some of the earliest efforts to spread the Gospel in the West."

Putting forward the claim that "in Glastonbury Abbey we have the one great religious foundation which lived through the storm of English conquest, and in which Britons and Englishmen have an equal share", he announced that

"The owner of Glastonbury Abbey has kindly given me permission to invite the Bishops who will be in England next year to visit Glastonbury, and I am writing to ask you whether you are willing to come there on Tuesday, August 3rd, the day after the closing ceremony of the Conference at St Paul's Cathedral. Glastonbury is about six miles from Wells, and about four hours' journey from London. Arrangements will be made for the journey being performed with comfort to the Bishops who attend, and for a luncheon for the Bishops at Glastonbury."<sup>29</sup>

The Lambeth Conference was to start with a pilgrimage to Canterbury, but it was to end with a pilgrimage to Glastonbury. The Anglican Pilgrimage to Glastonbury was undoubtedly in reaction to the 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage. It was attempting to undermine Catholic claims by stressing the pre-existence and pre-eminence of Glastonbury *before* the arrival of St. Augustine and Catholicism. It was to be held on the site of the Abbey. It was to be an altogether grander, higher

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<sup>28</sup> Clearly not all of the railway arrangements in relation to the Canterbury celebrations went according to plan, for according to *The Times* 3/7/1897, the Dean of Canterbury complained of "the appalling mismanagement by the railway authorities."

<sup>29</sup> Printed in *The Church Times*, 5/3/1897. 276.

profile event than the 1895 pilgrimage, and it very definitely relied on the railways for the logistics of bringing in so many pilgrims from much further afield.

On August 3rd, 1897, as the *Central Somerset Gazette* reported:

“The town was brightly decorated for the occasion: festoons of steamers spanned the principal streets, and the buildings were freely treated with flags and bunting and devices of an appropriate character. From an early hour in the morning visitors began to arrive by road and rail, and the approaches were continually thronged with pilgrims [...] The traffic was exceedingly heavy on all the local railway lines, about 4,000 people having thus reached the town, besides which several thousands more arrived by road. Messrs. Cook, the world-renowned promoters of modern-day tours, brought between 2,000 and 3,000 visitors. Consequently, there must have been nearly 10,000 visitors to the town.”<sup>30</sup>

Naturally considerable attention was paid to the special train, composed of saloon carriages, bringing the large number of bishops from London. Detachments of the Church Lads’ Brigade (an Anglican youth organisation) were positioned at Waterloo, Salisbury and Glastonbury stations to greet the bishops’ train. School-children with flags and a banner stating “Welcome to the diocese of Bath and Wells” had been located at Templecombe Station, Templecombe being the complicated junction between the main line from London and the Somerset and Dorset Railway to Glastonbury, which inevitably involved the train slowing down.

Although the special train had left London early in the morning, and was timed to arrive at Glastonbury at 1.15, because of some delay on the London and South-Western Railway, it was almost 2 o’clock when the train arrived. As the *Central Somerset Gazette* (7/8/1897) reported

“The bishops with some difficulty made their way along a crowded platform, took their seats in the carriages that were awaiting them, and were driven to the Assembly-rooms where they were entertained at luncheon by the Mayor of Glastonbury [...] The luncheon was of an hurried informal character, owing to the late arrival of the train.”

Approximately 120 bishops attended, and after lunch they went to St John’s Church on the High Street for robing. Meanwhile, roughly one thousand clergymen had robed at the Anglican St. John’s Church and St. Benedict’s Church, and formed up on the High Street in front of St John’s.

Unusually for England, it was an extremely hot day (in the 80s Fahrenheit/30s Celsius), which was to cause some discomfort to participants. All were to be

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<sup>30</sup> *Central Somerset Gazette*, 7/8/1897.

in place by 3.15pm for the start of the procession. In stark contrast to the long Catholic Pilgrimage route, the actual pilgrimage procession simply went up the High Street, around the corner into Chilkwell Street, into the grounds of Abbey House, round the south side of Abbey, and into the remains of the Abbey church.



Map of Glastonbury showing in blue the route taken by the 1897 Anglican Pilgrimage procession from St John's to the Abbey grounds, compared with the route taken by the 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage procession from the station to the Tor, in red.

The procession was, nevertheless, most impressive. A simplified version of the Procession plan, as reported in the *Central Somerset Gazette*, gives some idea of its grandeur and extent:

"Mayor and Corporation  
Lord Lieutenant & Deputy  
Cross bearer and acolytes  
8 x Companies of 32 clergy, separated by banners  
Bishops headed by three banners  
150 clergy  
Choirs of Bath Abbey, Wells Cathedral, St. John's & St. Benedict's  
Band of the Royal Marine Artillery  
Dignitaries from other dioceses  
Wells Cathedral Chapter  
Banners  
Bishop Herzog [convert from the Roman Catholic Church]  
Bishop of Stepney & chaplain

Bishop of Bath & Wells & chaplain  
Vicar of Leeds  
Archbishop of Canterbury, chaplain, cross & pages  
Chaplains of other bishops  
Banners  
250 clergy, separated by banners into groups of 32  
Students of St. Boniface's Missionary College, Warminster."<sup>31</sup>

The procession certainly caused great excitement in Glastonbury:

"The streets leading to the Abbey were lined with thousands of spectators, whilst every window along the route was filled, even the roofs of houses where practicable being used as points of vantage. As the procession slowly wended along, it presented a grand and imposing spectacle.

The Bishop of London [...] remarked that probably never since the Reformation had such a procession taken place in this country, and that certainly never did Glastonbury in its palmiest days see anything to compare with the number of pilgrims who visited it on that day [...] The procession was picturesque and remarkable in the extreme."<sup>32</sup>

Reflecting the fact that such processions were still comparatively novel in the Anglican context, the reporter for the Anglican publication *The Church Times* commented that

"The attitude of the crowd in the streets was distinctly creditable. There was no semblance of devotion about it, and it would have been unreasonable to expect a demeanour of reverence there. But a strong and friendly interest was manifest on every face [...] and in the England of thirty years ago how would the procession of hundreds of surpliced clergy in the open streets have been met? By unfriendly astonishment, if not by worse."<sup>33</sup>

Despite the comparatively short distance, the long procession took about an hour to get settled inside the Abbey grounds. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Bath & Wells, and other Archbishops and Metropolitans sat at the east end of the choir, with Bishops on chairs on each side, dignitaries and clergy occupied the rest of choir, and the general public were in the nave and other parts of the grounds. The address of the Bishop of Stepney, Bishop Designate of Bristol,

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<sup>31</sup> *Central Somerset Gazette* 7/8/1897.

<sup>32</sup> *Central Somerset Gazette* 7/8/1897.

<sup>33</sup> *The Church Times* 6/8/1897. 139.

was reported in full, both in the *Central Somerset Gazette* and *The Church Times*. He declared that

“there are persons foolish enough to declare that the Church of England before the Reformation was a Roman Catholic Church. It never was. It was always the *Ecclesia Anglicana, Anglorum Ecclesia*.”<sup>34</sup>

After the Bishop of Stepney’s address, the Magnificat was recited, and the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a blessing. Hymns were sung while the Bishops and clergy left the Abbey. As the *Central Somerset Gazette* reported, after the Bishops had unrobed, “they and their wives were entertained to tea and a garden party by Mrs. Stanley Austin at the Abbey, the Wells City Band rendering a choice selection of music during the evening.”<sup>35</sup>

There were subsequently some critical comments concerning the length and density of the Bishop of Stepney’s address and the impropriety of people applauding at some points.

“When the Church was in effect taking possession again in the name of God His desecrated house, it was not the time to be scoring against Rome small points of controversial triumph. Thousands were waiting there with hearts open and eager to hear what would uplift and inspirit [...] Better if the address had been a sermon.”<sup>36</sup>

The issue of payment was also raised. *The Church Times* noted that

“[...] the public were admitted to the [Abbey] grounds only on the payment of three shillings. Thousands would have gone into the service, we are credibly informed, had the usual charge of sixpence been made. But it is the old story of the exclusiveness of official Anglicanism, un-careful of the masses, and caring only for the big purses. It was a grand opportunity completely thrown away, for the people were sympathetic and willing to be enthusiastic. Thousands went a long distance to be there, many went from the midlands, Birmingham, and elsewhere, and to them an extra three shillings was completely prohibitive. The Bishop of Bath and Wells, who is both one of the secretaries to the Conference and a chief promoter of the Glastonbury function, is especially to blame. With his lordship’s colonial experience, we might have expected better things.”<sup>37</sup>

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34 *The Church Times* 6/8/1897. 139.

35 *Central Somerset Gazette* 7/8/1897.

36 *The Church Times*, 6/8/1897.

37 *The Church Times*, 6/8/1897.

Overall, however, the day was judged a huge success on a number of levels. The Anglican Church had retaliated very publicly to the 1895 Roman Catholic pilgrimage to Glastonbury and its concomitant claims on 'authentic' English Christianity. At the end of the day, as the *Central Somerset Gazette* reported

"The large influx of people also gradually decreased in number as the special trains bore them homeward, but it was not till late at night that the town resumed its normal appearance. The arrangements of the police in dealing with the vast concourse of people were extremely satisfactory [...] Special praise is also due to the railway officials for their efficiency in coping with the enormous traffic."<sup>38</sup>

The railway, once again, had made possible the transportation of huge numbers of people to Glastonbury for a one day event of considerable symbolic importance. The rail link with London in particular enabled Bishops from around the world to converge on Glastonbury.

## Conclusion

The Somerset and Dorset Railway was instrumental in the late 19th century revival of pilgrimage to and the public contestation of Glastonbury as a sacred site. Both the 1895 and 1897 Glastonbury Pilgrimages highlighted „diverse processes of sacralization of movement, persons and/ or places“ and „meta-movement – the combination of mobility itself with a degree of reflexivity as to its meaning, form and function.“<sup>39</sup>

For the 1895 Catholic Pilgrimage in particular, not only had the trains transported the pilgrims but they had been incorporated into the event itself as devotional sites. The train journey, like the procession itself, was punctuated by prayers and hymns; train travel and the trains themselves were temporarily scalarised. In 1895 the special pilgrimage train from Bath also functioned as a mobile vestry. The lack of access to private rooms for robing stood in stark contrast to the amenities later afforded to the Anglican clerics and related personnel, with Glastonbury station platform being used for this purpose by some of the participants in the Catholic event. The station yard was utilised to muster the procession, and the station's situation on the edge of town reflected the marginal status of the Catholic pilgrims. The great majority of Catholic pilgrims walked the distance from the station to the Tor, circumambulating the ruined Abbey site at the centre of Glastonbury, commemorating the last journey of the Glastonbury martyrs; the form and function of the procession was redolent with meaning.

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<sup>38</sup> *Central Somerset Gazette* 7/8/1897.

<sup>39</sup> COLEMAN - EADE 2004. 18.



In contrast, the railway functioned more mundanely as vital infrastructure to transport the high-status, international guests and unprecedented numbers of pilgrims and sightseers for the 1897 Anglican Pilgrimage. Designed to dazzle in both form and function, the size, status and magnificence of the Anglican procession reinforced the *status quo*, underlined that the Anglican Church represented and was part of the establishment, and that it could command resources and personnel to greatly outshine and upstage the Catholic Church in relation to Glastonbury. The focus of the Anglican Pilgrimage was firmly on the centre of town, specifically on the Abbey, to which the Anglican pilgrims had privileged access for their service and on which the Anglican hierarchy was most definitely staking a claim. The fact that so many people could both participate in and view the spectacle of the Anglican Pilgrimage was nevertheless dependent on the railway.



2015 Catholic Glastonbury Pilgrimage in the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey. Photograph Marion Bowman.



There is still an annual Catholic Pilgrimage and an annual Anglican Pilgrimage to Glastonbury, and these days both pilgrimage processions are given access to the Abbey grounds.<sup>40</sup> Since the late nineteenth century numerous other claims have been made on and for Glastonbury as a religious and spiritual centre, and the procession has been utilised by a variety of people and groups as a means of establishing a presence in and taking a stand there.<sup>41</sup> The railway itself has not fared so well. In 1966 the Glastonbury line was closed, the station fell into ruins and was demolished; barely a trace of it remains at the site. Bizarrely, one last railway relic remains, far away from the station, in the town's central car park. Vestiges of the Somerset and Dorset railway line now provide a pathway through the site of the world famous Glastonbury Festival at nearby Pilton, arguably a different sort of contemporary pilgrimage event.<sup>42</sup> The railway's legacy, though, lives on in relation to the religious revival, contestation and the use of the procession as a means of staking claims on Glastonbury which it enabled and sparked off in 1895 and 1897.



Last remnant of Glastonbury station, relocated to a car park in the centre of town.  
Photograph Marion Bowman.

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<sup>40</sup> The Abbey is now administered by a Trust as an historic site; both Anglican and Catholic pilgrims pay an entrance fee.

<sup>41</sup> BOWMAN 1993; 2004; 2008; 2015a.

<sup>42</sup> McKay 2000; Bowman 2009.

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## NATIONAL PILGRIMAGES, PILGRIM TRAINS AND IDENTITY-BUILDING

**Abstract:** The spread of public transport in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century changed people's travel habits. It also brought change in travel for religious purposes, enabling a new form of religious mass tourism to emerge. As the railways grew into a European network, distant shrines (as Lourdes, Rome) became more accessible. Long-distance pilgrimages were revived and grew to a mass scale, reviving or augmenting the popularity of some shrines. Special trains were organised for pilgrimages within individual countries too, enabling new trends to flourish. Ethnological research and anthropology of religion have paid little attention to this form of mass pilgrimage that is still alive and has 'traditional' forms in many countries of Europe. The paper analyses the organisation and itineraries of pilgrim trains and their influence on the shrines, as well as the spread of devotional forms, identity-building both within Hungary and internationally. It analyses mainly reports on travel to Lourdes and Rome at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, touches on the "Hungarian holy years" in the 1930s, and the organisation of pilgrim trains following the change of political system (1989-1990).

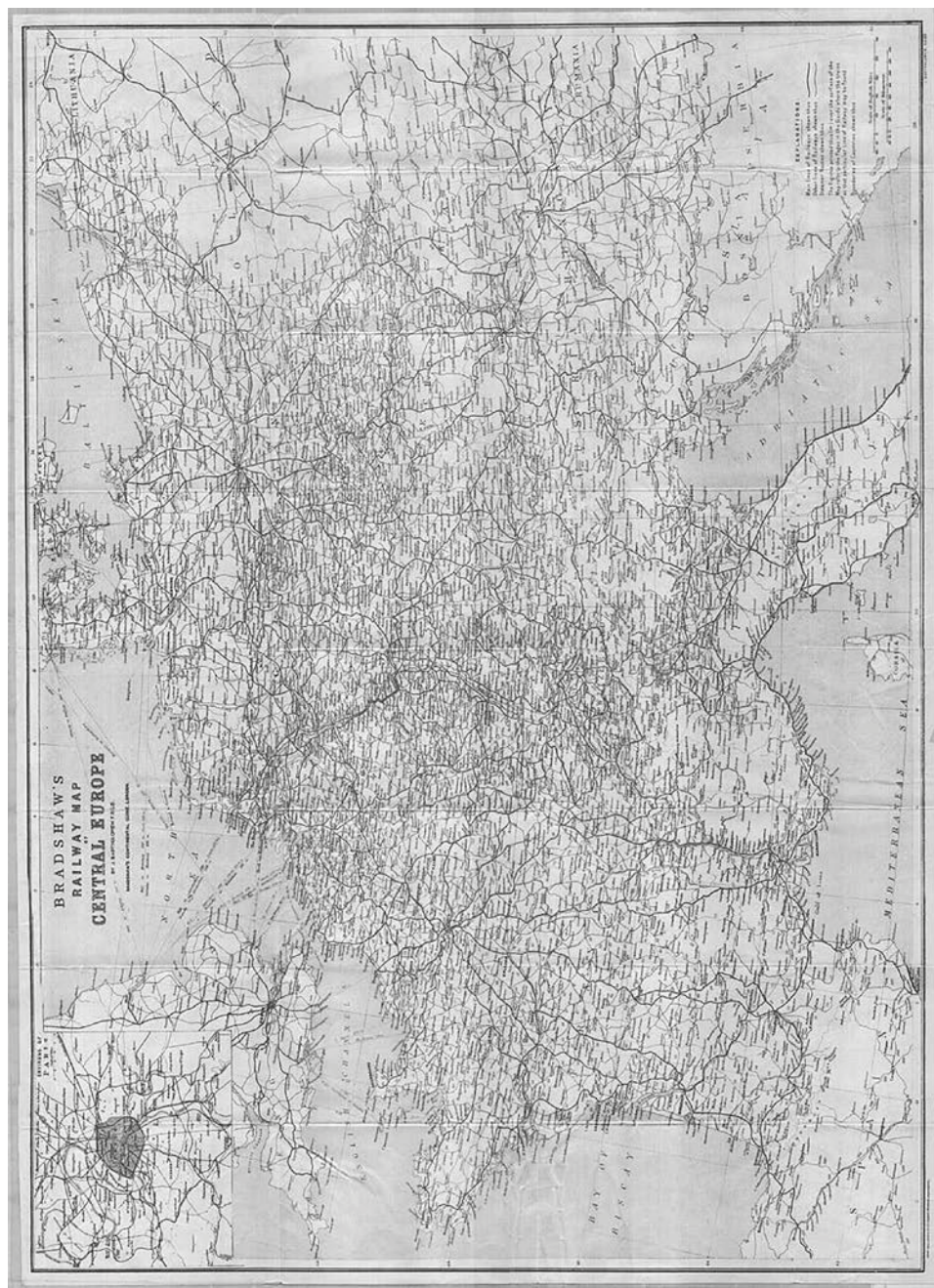
**Keywords:** pilgrim trains, Lourdes, Limpas, Rome, Hungarian holy years, identity building, memories

The Hungarian railways network was built over half a century, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the century it had become a uniform network and was connected to the European railway network through the neighbouring countries.

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary, Email: gaborbarnadr@gmail.com

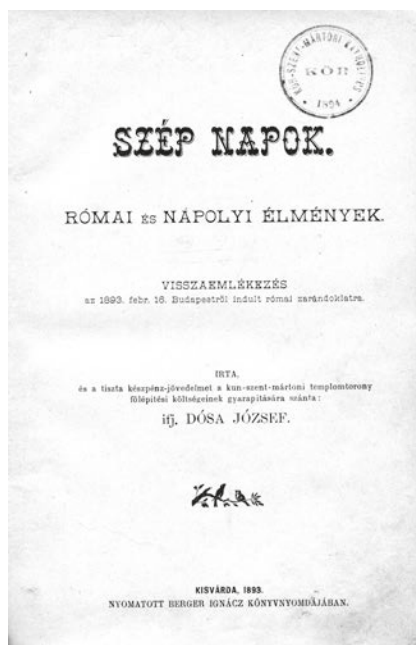




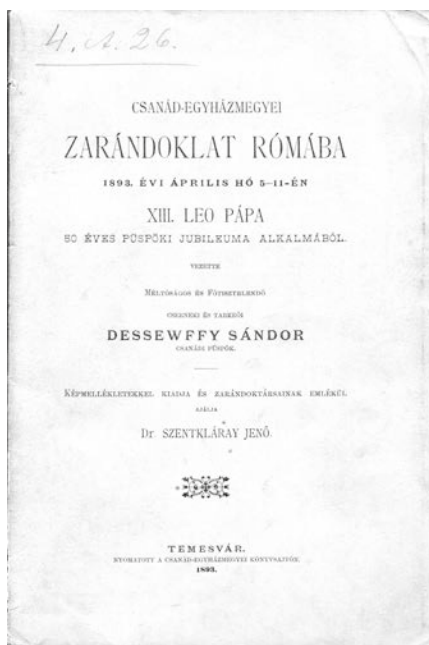
Railway map of Central Europe at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century

It was mainly economic considerations that determined the routes chosen for the railway lines, but the volume of passenger traffic also influenced the development of the railways. The new technical invention set new directions, opened up new possibilities for mass transport and also had a strong influence on society. Besides individual travel, already in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century group travels were organised for various purposes. Among them pilgrim trains were operated with increasing frequency and for ever growing numbers until the WWII, taking pilgrims to shrines both within the country and abroad.<sup>1</sup>

Tourism anthropology and cultural anthropology research on the history of Hungarian railways has not yet examined the special trains and in particular pilgrim trains. Even the sources have yet to be explored. Printed memoirs of pilgrimages by train, written by people who took part in the pilgrimage represent a special source on this subject. I used them in preparing this presentation. They record individual experiences and impressions, as well as the time spent at the shrine. They were written by priests or lay participants. The oldest travel diaries generally contain mainly the subjective impressions of their authors, while more recent ones also give much practical information on the journey, the accommodations available, travel (transfers, timetables) and often also portraits of the participants as well as the compulsory group photos taken in the sacred places.



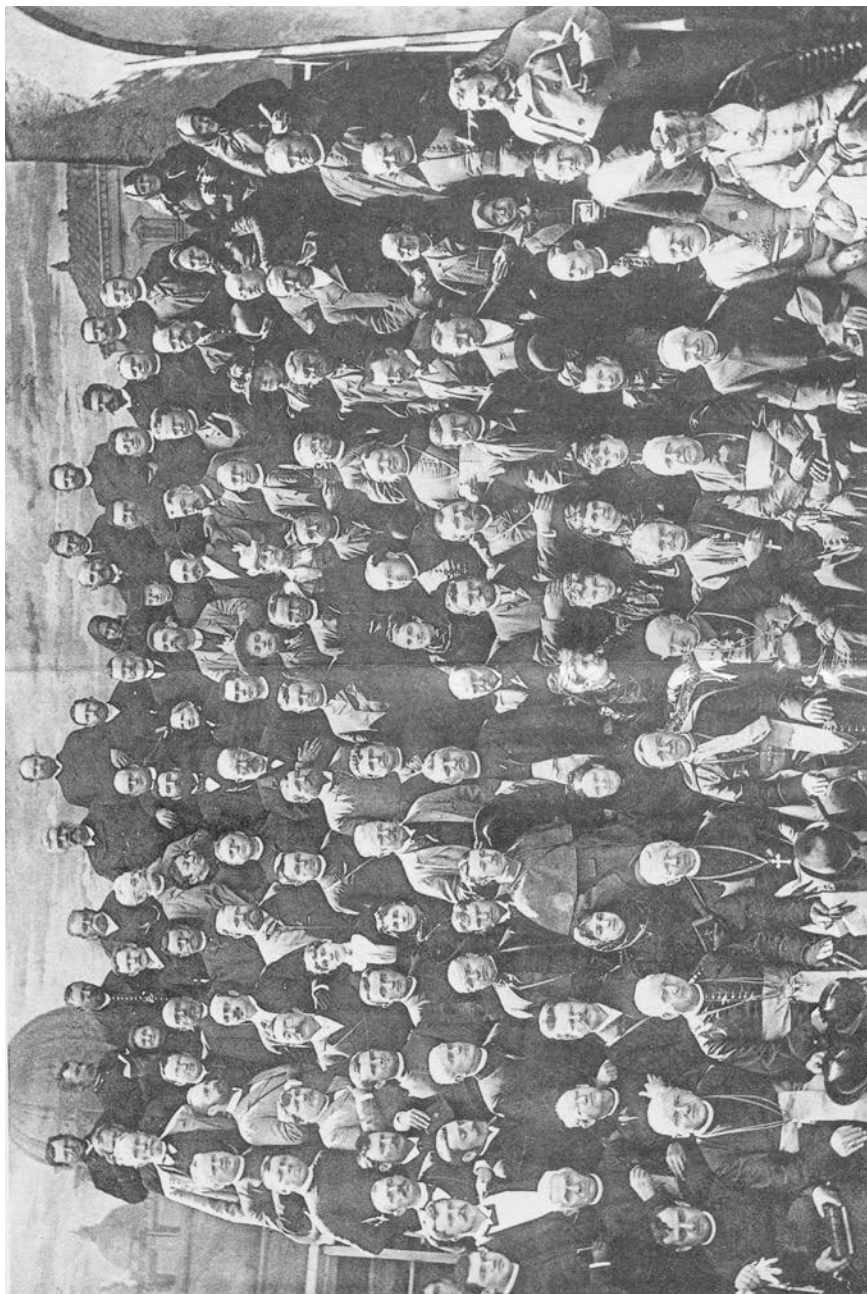
József Dósa's recollections of a pilgrimage to Rome in 1893



Pilgrimage from Csanád diocese to Rome, 1893, for the episcopal jubilee of Pope Leo XIII (Desseffy 1893)

1 [http://timelord.blog.hu/2012/12/01/az\\_első\\_magyar\\_társasutazás#more4940091](http://timelord.blog.hu/2012/12/01/az_első_magyar_társasutazás#more4940091)





Participants in the pilgrimage from Csanád diocese (Dessewffy 1893)



Participants in the pilgrimage from Csanád diocese (Dessewffy 1893)



One of the important consequences of the appearance of the railways was that they expanded the range of sacred places that could be visited. Faster travel meant that people could travel to distant places without having to be absent from work for long periods. Moreover, the costs came within the reach of more people. As a result the appearance of the railways greatly changed and democratised the social scope of participants in pilgrimages.

The traditional pilgrimages made in groups have always mainly involved the community of a single parish. Although they may be of different genders, ages and occupations, they are all steeped in and follow the same religious tradition and practice.

However, people making pilgrimages by train in the past and today may have been recruited from different communities. The participants met for the first time when the train departed. The collectively experienced events of the pilgrimage formed them into a community, a “community of experience”.

For a long while the organisers were priests, but their role was increasingly taken over by Hungarian and foreign travel agencies. The priests became mainly spiritual leaders. In the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were joined by entrepreneurs, urban and rural intelligentsia, and prosperous peasants. The nature of pilgrimage changed: besides the desire for a religious experience, penitence, seeking healing or an answer to prayers, people also wanted to see the world, get to know art treasures (cultural tourism) and go sightseeing. This latter also allowed a limited glimpse into the everyday life of the country or region visited. While sightseeing participants could see the shops, the range of goods on sale, the way people behaved, they could experience their goodwill or, on the contrary, their hostility. Right from the start pilgrimages by train were a form of religious tourism.

The spiritual goal of pilgrimages, beyond the strictly religious content (glorifying God, veneration of the saints, seeking their intercession) has always been to seek a Christian, Catholic community experience. The motivation for participation may have changed. The religious motivations that dominated in the traditional community pilgrimages (penitence, pledges, vows) were joined in the train pilgrimages by a growing desire to see the world. The demand appeared for comfortable travel, full service as far as possible and the opportunity to see the main sights. This in turn increasingly influenced the physical environment of the shrines: accommodations for pilgrims were provided with ever better facilities. The religious tourist trip appeared with the train pilgrimages. Religious practice was limited to church ceremonies. We find tourists who want to see the world outside the church, to visit museums, go sightseeing on foot, get to know the culinary culture of the country they are in. These people were also demanding regarding their accommodation and travelling conditions.

The shrines of macro-regional or international significance have always as it were held up a mirror to the individual and to communities small and large. In this mirror individuals and communities can recognise their characteristics, what they do differently, how they think differently from others. This recognition can make them aware of their identity with their own community and of their

differences from others. But it can also show the fundamental unity in the differences: the community and identical nature of the Catholic religion and its teaching, the veneration of saints.

The structural content of the pilgrimage has also changed. Because of the more rapid progress, fewer songs and prayers were needed. It was only at stopping places and not throughout the entire journey that pilgrims could come into contact with the local population. But new opportunities opened for seeing the world, there was more time, or simply just time to see the sights of the towns visited, especially where they had or have some kind of Hungarian connection. According to the travel reports and memoirs, the participants also took advantage of these possibilities.

The mass pilgrimages also had, and continue to have an influence on the railways and on travel customs. Travel with a fixed schedule (departure, transfers, etc.) influenced the practice of prayers.

— 10 —

<b>Marseilleből</b>	ind. 10'17
<b>Tarascon</b>	12'41 d. u.

Közös ebéd.

<b>Tarasconból</b>	ind. 1'56 d. u.
<b>Cette</b>	5'38
<b>Toulouse</b>	10'22

Aug. 3. **LOURDES** 5'00 reg.

Itt maradunk három napig. Az ottani napiprogramm előtte való napon tudunkra fog esni. Ott leszünk mindenkinek teljes rendelkezésére.

Aug. 5. **Lourdesből** ind. 6'23 este

„ 6. **Marseilleben** reggeli

**Ventimigliában** ebéd

**Genuában** megszállunk éjszakára.

Aug. 7. **Genuából** indulás 6'15 reg.

**Pisa** 10'45

**RÓMA** 9'00 este

Itt is három napig maradunk. Egyik

— 11 —

napon pápai fogadtatás. A napi programmot szintén előzetesen tudatjuk.

Aug.10. **Rómából** indulás 12'30 d. u.

**Ancona** 10'00 este

**Anconából** indulás kora reggel.

Aug.11. **LORETÓ-ba** érke. 6'34 reg.

Itt szent misék, gyónás, áldozás (aki óhajtja). A Szentház és kincstára megtekintése. Reggeli és ebéd.

**Loretóból** indulás 4'34 d. u.

Aug.12. **Velence** érkezés 9'47

Itt a Szt. Márk-templom megtekintése. Innen már haza sietünk. Némelyek esetleg elválnak és visszamaradnak, illetve más irányba utaznak tovább. A tengeren is lehet utazni Fiuméba vagy Triesztbe.

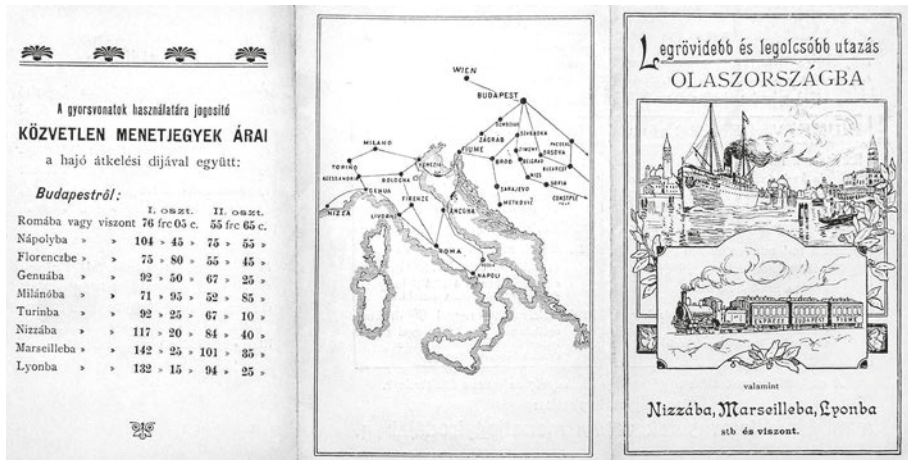
**Cormonsba** érke. 4'30 d. u.

Aug.13. **Budapest** érke. 10'15 d. e.

Akik Budapestig nem akarnak jönni,

Timetable to Lourdes, 1912

The special trains also influenced the railways themselves, the way the carriages were arranged. From 1870 railway carriages became increasingly comfortable, and by the interwar years pilgrims could travel in Pullman carriages. People could also wash themselves on these trains. The costs were calculated for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class travel.



Fares to Lourdes, 1912

I. Gyorsvonaton:						
	I. h.	II. h.	I. h.	II. h.	távols.	
Budapest—Prágerhof	—	—	frt 24·65	frt 19·39	334 klm.	
Prágerhof—Triest	—	—	„ 17·81	„ 13·25	284 „	
Triest—Velencze:	lira 25·90	lira 18·45	„ 12·—	„ 9·—	214 „	
Velencze—Miláno	„ 33·20	„ 23·30	„ 15·—	„ 11·—	266 „	
Miláno—Genua	„ 19·5	„ 13·35	„ 9·—	„ 6·—	168 „	
Genua—Marseille	„ 50·95	„ 37·25	„ 23·—	„ 17·—	412 „	
Marseille—Toulouse	frk. 46·75	frk. 35·10	„ 21·—	„ 16·—	425 „	
Toulouse—Lurd	„ 21·75	„ 16·30	„ 10·—	„ 7·50	177 „	
			frt 133·46	frt 99·14	2280 klm.	
Visszafelé ugyanennyi, tehát oda-vissza: I. h. 267 frt., II. h. 198 frt 28 kr.						
II. Személyszállító-vonaton:						
	I. h.	II. h.	III. h.	I. h.	II. h.	III. h.
Bpest—Prágerhof	—	—	—	frt 21·38	frt 16·16	frt 10·96
Pr.—Triest	—	—	—	„ 14·91	„ 11·19	„ 7·52
T.—Velencze	lira 25·50	lira 18·25	lira 12·80	„ 11·48	„ 8·50	„ 5·90
V.—Miláno	„ 30·15	„ 21·15	„ 15·15	„ 14·50	„ 10·—	„ 7·20
M—Genua	„ 17·30	„ 12·10	„ 8·70	„ 8·—	„ 5·50	„ 4·—
G—Marseille	„ 49·15	„ 35·95	„ 26·15	„ 23·—	„ 17·—	„ 12·—
M.—Toulouse	frk. 46·75	frk. 35·10	frk. 25·70	„ 21·—	„ 16·—	„ 11·50
T.—Lurd	„ 21·75	„ 16·30	„ 11·95	„ 10·—	„ 7·50	„ 5·50
				frt 124·27	frt 91·85	frt 64·58
Oda-vissza: I. h. 248 frt 54 kr., II. h. 183 frt 70 kr., III. h. 129 frt 16 kr.						

Fares to towns in Italy and France, 1912

From the 1870s students and their teachers setting out on youth pilgrimages were given big concessions. Passengers travelling first class received full service, those in second and third class had to provide for their own meals. Whenever possible, pilgrims on journeys that lasted several days slept in hotels.

Passengers in the different class carriages were confined together for long periods, even days, having their meals, sleeping and – as these were pilgrimages – praying and singing together. The halts on the way and overnight stays influenced hotel and restaurant businesses and life in the settlements concerned. Memoirs place special emphasis on the foreign cuisines, unaccustomed ingredients, spices and foods tasted. Such comparisons usually ended with praise for Hungarian cuisine.<sup>2</sup>

All this can be clearly seen in the many travel reports of pilgrimages published between the 1880s and the 1930s. After the Second World War, during the decades of socialism in Hungary the train pilgrimages ceased. Strong restrictions were imposed on church and religious life. It is only from 1990 and the decades following the change of political system that we can speak again of pilgrimages by train.

In this short article I shall sum up what we can learn from a few travel reports of journeys to Mariazell, Lourdes, Limpas and Rome in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, mentioning the special Hungarian material on pilgrim trains in the interwar years, and also drawing on the websites of pilgrimage offices after 1990.

## **Pilgrimages by train up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century – significance for Hungarians**

A major factor determining the train journeys in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries was that most of them led to places that had for centuries ties with Hungary: Rome, Mariazell, Czestochowa.

Rome, the centre of the Catholic world, Mariazell a Hungarian national shrine from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the invocation of its miraculous statue of Mary is: *Magna Domina Hungarorum*. And Hungarians have ties to Czestochowa through the Pauline monastic order (Ordo Sancti Pauli Primi Eremitae) and national connections.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1920s-1930s participants on pilgrimages to Rome were inspired not only by their Catholic faith but also by “patriotic Hungarian national sentiments” according to the organisers of pilgrimages. An almost ritualised manifestation of this was that on the way there the pilgrim train was stopped or slowed in Northern Italy, at the bridge over the Piave River as pilgrims threw wreaths into the river from the bridge. Many Hungarians died at this spot during the First World

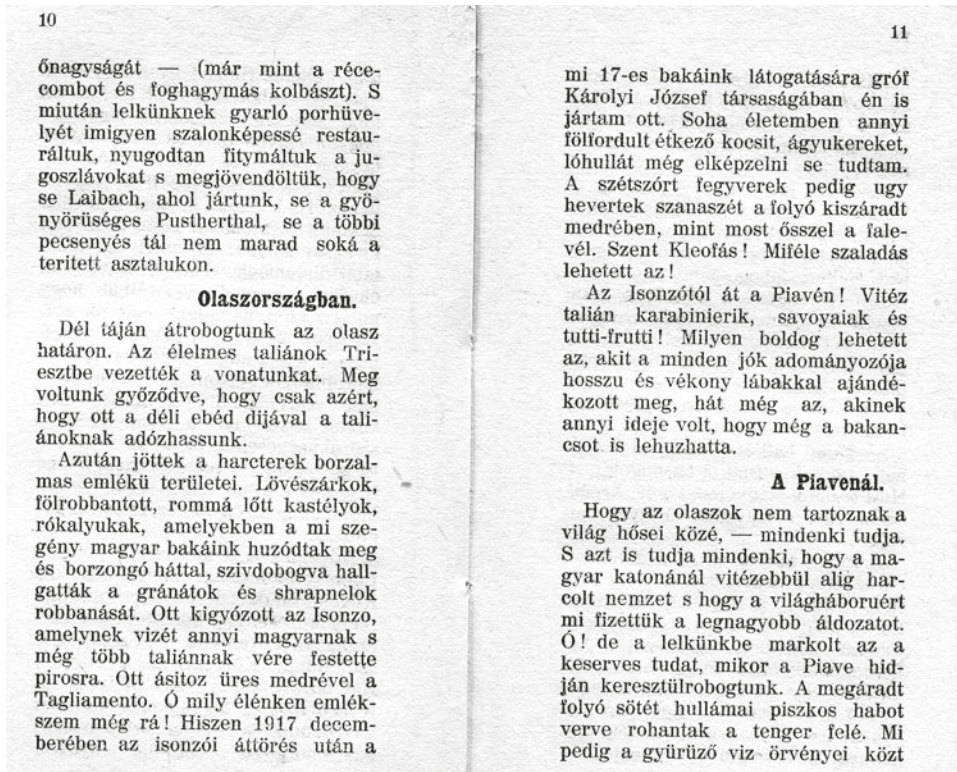
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<sup>2</sup> Ifj. Dósa 1893. passim

<sup>3</sup> Czestochowa (Jasna Gora) monastery was founded by Hungarian Pauline monks in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



War.<sup>4</sup> This became a regular practice on Hungarian pilgrimages in the interwar years. It is mentioned in all the travel reports.<sup>5</sup>



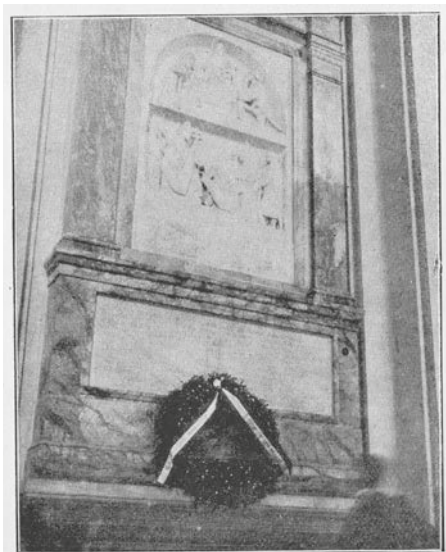
Commemoration of the Battles of the Isonzo and the Piave (Bilkei 1926. 10-11.)

Among the main churches in Rome the Lateran basilica was the most important for Hungarians: it is here that the tomb of Pope Sylvester II is found. He sent our first king, Saint Stephen, his crown. This scene is recorded in a relief placed here in 1910 that is visited by all Hungarian pilgrim groups to place a wreath. Above the tablet Saint Stephen and Saint Ladislav can be seen paying tribute to the Blessed Lady of the Hungarians. This was placed by the Hungarian church in the anniversary year, 1900. According to our cardinal at the time: "our Catholicism is fully compatible with our identity as Hungarians".<sup>6</sup>

4 PAULOVITS 1926. 11-12.

5 DR. CSIKÓS NAGY 1933.

6 PAULOVITS 192. 12.



II. Szilveszter pápának, a magyarság nagy barátjának emléke a Laterán bazilikában.

Memorial tablet for Pope Sylvester II in the Lateran basilica, 1934; he sent the crown to Stephen, the first Hungarian king (AD 1000) (Azuros tájakon 1935. 52.)

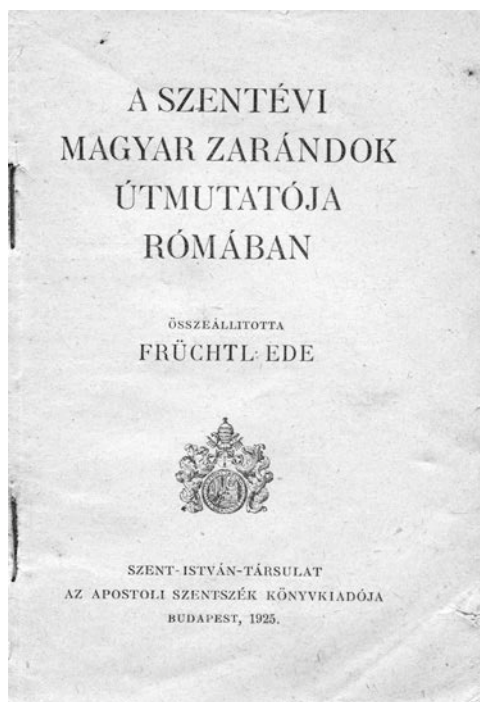


Memorial tablet for Pope Sylvester II in the Lateran basilica, with a portrayal of the Blessed Lady of the Hungarians

Christianity and Hungarian identity also became closely intertwined in the historical consciousness of the Hungarian people: Hungarians regarded themselves as the bastion protecting Europe an Christianity in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire.

The close connection between culture history and religion also has an influence on individual and collective consciousness. Individuals see and experience themselves as members of the big Catholic community. This gives them strength as they see that they are not alone in their faith and religious practice. And through artistic and architectural relics they are faced with the works of their predecessors, with Hungarian history that is also Christian history. The centuries-old itineraries and guidebooks changed, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> century guidebooks intended also for tourists began to appear. A fine example of this is the "Guide to Rome" published for the 1925 holy year; besides the sights of museums and churches it also gives useful advice on transport and the bureaucratic administration of the time.<sup>7</sup> In the case of churches, it mentions all the sights and aspects of Hungarian relevance.

7 FRÜCHTL 1925.

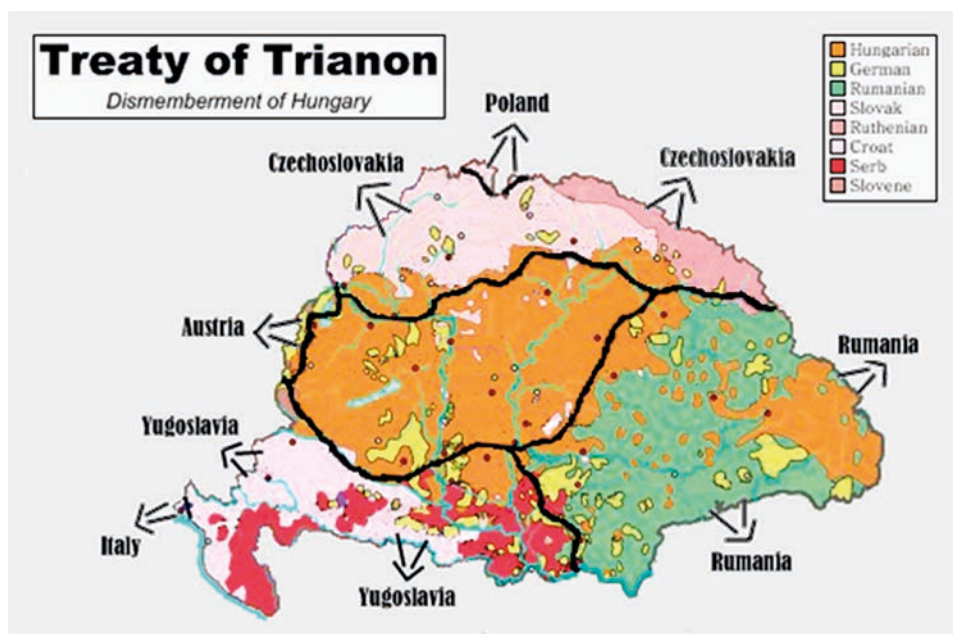


Guide for Hungarian pilgrims to Rome in the Holy Year 1925 (Früchtl 1925.)

What kind of mental condition can be found in the background? Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century a growing demand appeared for what could be called a Hungarian experience, for the strengthening of Hungarian identity. This is why it was important to seek out anything Hungarian-related at the sacred places mentioned. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of the Hungarian bourgeois nation, a certain aspiration for independence from Austrian direction within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. People wanted to show that the Hungarians are not second-class citizens of the Habsburg empire. Familiarity with the relics of Hungarian history could help to strengthen that feeling. These elements of consciousness were important for the group and train pilgrimages. Often they began to play a role in the motivation for participation and were not unrelated to the historical circumstances either.

What are these circumstances in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

After the lost First World War and the subsequent tragic dismemberment of Hungary the national content greatly increased: in the atmosphere of the time people could look for change and hope only to God and Mary, Patron of Hungarians. As a consequence of the Trianon peace dictate, the country lost two-thirds of its territory and one third of the Hungarian population came under foreign rule.



Ethnic groups in the Kingdom of Hungary, and the new borders after the First World War

The national sentiment was deeply hurt. In 1925 separate groups of Hungarian pilgrims from the occupied territories of the neighbouring countries (Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia) travelled to Rome. A large group also represented the Hungarian diaspora in America. Here, in the Eternal City, the Hungarian nation was united virtually. There was a strong belief that the loyalty of the Hungarian people to the Catholic church was a guarantee of their survival as nation. The Pope, Pius XI, also spoke of this.<sup>8</sup>

A good example of the motivating force of national sentiment is the beginning of Hungarian pilgrimages to Lourdes which was new and very attractive for whole Europe at that time. The first Hungarian pilgrims went to Lourdes from the Paris World Exposition in 1878. Here they saw that the shrine was decorated with the flags of many countries. They made a vow to send the Hungarian national flag to Lourdes. Their proposal was embraced in Hungary and in August 1881 a committee was formed to organise the first Hungarian national pilgrimage to Lourdes. Later Hungarian pilgrim groups often had their photo taken with the Hungarian national flag placed at the shrine of the Virgin, the Lourdes basilica.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> PAULOVITS 1926, *passim*

<sup>9</sup> EMLÉKKÖNYV... 1883. 118. ff.; PURT [1897.]





Hungarian pilgrims in Lourdes, with the Hungarian flag taken to Limpias (Paulovits 1926. 271.)



Tenth station of the Lourdes Way of the Cross with the Hungarian arms (Paulovits 1926. 173.)

The fact that in 1912 the 10<sup>th</sup> station of the Way of the Cross – visited with pride by Hungarian pilgrims – was erected from the donations of Hungarian believers can be attributed to the regular Hungarian presence.

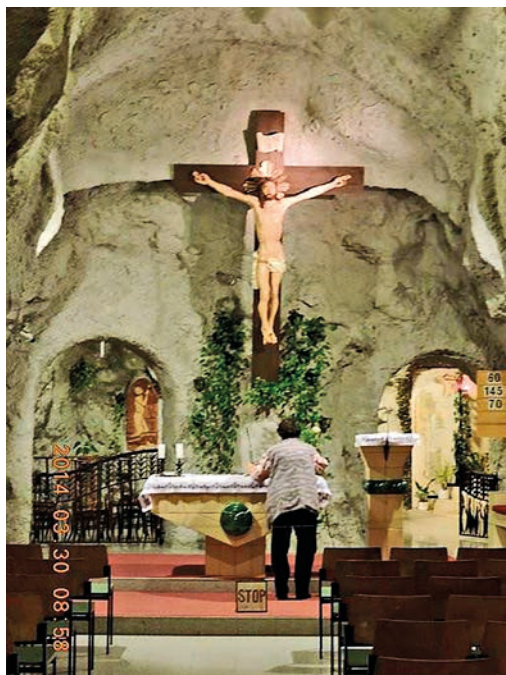
Lourdes exerted an enormous attraction throughout Europe. In Hungary too, Lourdes grottos and altars were built in many places or simply an image of the cave was placed in churches and private homes.<sup>10</sup> The strong devotion to Mary was the driving force behind the visits to Lourdes and other shrines. Hungarians often mention with pride the fact that their country is “Mary’s country”: our first king, Saint Stephen, after the tragic death of the heir to the throne, committed his kingdom and people to the protection of the Virgin Mother. This is reflected in the donation of Hungarian flags to Lourdes.

Right up to the present this circumstance has given a strong Hungarian national content to train pilgrimages to destinations outside Hungary.

From 1919, according to the testimony of several people the figure of Jesus on the crucifix on the main altar of the church in the small Basque village of Lempdes moved, its face and mouth moved and drops of blood fell from its forehead crowned with thorns.



Prayer sheet for the 1925 Holy Year with an image of the Limpias crucifix



The Limpias crucifix in the Cave Church, Budapest

<sup>10</sup> These were erected mainly by local religious confraternities, especially the Living Rosary Confraternity.



“He suffered for mankind and showed again the terrible agony of death”, to awaken the world’s conscience.<sup>11</sup> People from all over Europe visited the Límpias cross in those years. But the Hungarians were the first to place their nation symbolically before and under the shelter of the crucifix.<sup>12</sup> Some of the Hungarian groups to Lourdes or Límpias also visited the Habsburg family who lived in the vicinity.<sup>13</sup> This is an indication that in the 1920s in some groups of the population sympathy with the exiled Habsburg royal family was also mixed with the religious motivations and national sentiments.

The aim of pilgrimages to Rome was always to show loyalty to the Catholic church, the Holy See and the pope. This is confirmed by the fact that in 1925, the Rome Holy Year, seven national pilgrimages organised by bishops and dioceses set out at different times to Rome. These were all pilgrimages by train made by hundreds of people in smaller groups (members of different orders, schools, Scouts, etc.).<sup>14</sup> The beatifications and canonisations (Saint Peter Canisius, Terese of Lisieux, Bernadette Soubirous) added to the attraction of the 1925 holy year.

In 1925, the first holy year after the First World War, and in the extraordinary jubilee in 1933 marking the 1900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our salvation (the death and resurrection of Jesus), Hungarian pilgrims naturally performed the religious obligations involved in pilgrimages (visiting the patriarchal basilicas, confession, communion, prayers for the pope). But according to the evidence of the published reports of the pilgrimages, sightseeing, visits to the ancient Roman ruins, the basilicas and the Vatican museum were important events. The books contained numerous photographs of these places, including exhibitions in the museums. The aim of these visits, even to the ancient ruins, was to recall the memory of martyrs and saints, and to strengthen Christian Catholic identity through contemplation of works of art. However, Hungarian pilgrim groups consciously sought out places of Hungarian relevance at all these sites. For example, the Santo Stefano Rotondo, the Hungarians’ church in the Middle Ages, beside the Lateran basilica. Some travel reports noted that the Italians were in sympathy with Hungarians.<sup>15</sup> This can be attributed to historical factors: after the defeat of the Hungarian war of liberation against the Habsburgs (1848-49) many Hungarian soldiers fought in Garibaldi’s army for Italian unity.

In the 1930s there were so called holy years in Hungary. 1930 was the Year of Saint Emmerich, 1938 the Year of Saint Stephen, 1943 the Year of Saint Ladislás, and 1944 the Year of Saint Margaret. All these saints are members of the Árpád-house the first dynasty of the Hungarian Kingdom. The faithful came by special train from different parts of the country to the central celebrations in Budapest. Special pilgrimages were organised in 1938, the jubilee Year of Saint Stephen,

<sup>11</sup> PAULOVITS 1926. 182.

<sup>12</sup> PAULOVITS 1926. 185-186.

<sup>13</sup> PAULOVITS 1926.

<sup>14</sup> A year later, in 1926 Dr. Sándor Paulovits, a Catholic priest published his recollections of the trips with hundreds of photos. Paulovits 1926.

<sup>15</sup> He does not give a reason for this, but the fact that a large number of Hungarians fought against the Austrians in Garibaldi’s army was a big factor.

when King Stephen's preserved right hand, known as the Holy Right Hand, was carried around the country on a train specially fitted out for the purpose.



The Gold Train carrying the relics of Saint Stephen, Kiskunfélegyháza railway station, 1938



The Gold Train, Kiskunfélegyháza railway station, 1938

Tens of thousands saw the national and religious relic at the stations where the train stopped.

These years represented the high-water mark for pilgrim trains in Hungary. In the 1940s the Hungarian State Railways offered special reductions to the large pilgrim groups to several shrines. These images show the concessions for travel to Máriabesnyő and Sümeg.

# MÁV Besnyőig és vissza:

# HÉV Gödöllőig és vissza:

Bp. Józsefv. p. u. indul	Bp. Kétfel. p. u. indul	Besnyőre érkezik	Besnyőről indul	Bp. Kétfel. p. u. ra érkezik
5:50	7:11	4:00	5:30	
8:40	10:02	5:08	6:38	
14:21	15:31	6:41	7:53	
15:35	16:52	7:05	8:25	
16:55	18:19	8:23	9:45	
18:25	19:39	14:17	15:36	
20:22	21:46	16:37	17:48	
		19:11	20:30	
		21:18	22:20	

Bp. Kerepesi-dt. indul	Gödöllőre érkezik	Gödöllőről indul	Bp. Kerepesi-dt. ra érkezik
6:36	7:45	5:06	6:15
7:45	8:54	6:00	7:09
9:30	10:39	6:40	7:44
11:10	12:19	7:55	8:59
12:40	13:49	9:40	10:49
13:40	14:44	11:15	12:24
15:00	16:04	13:00	14:09
16:10	17:19	14:09	15:18
17:00	18:09	15:10	16:19
18:30	19:39	16:15	17:24
19:50	20:59	17:36	18:45
21:15	22:29	19:00	20:09
23:30	0:39	20:15	21:24
		22:00	23:09

\* Csak hétköznap közlekedik.

## Csoportos zárandoklatokat

díjmentesen rendez és minden felvilágosítással szolgál

### az ORA Kultúriroda:

Budapest, VIII., Cláfd-t 40. III. 2. — Telefon: 143—411.

Az ORA Kultúriroda által rendezett csoportos zárandoklatok kőbő-  
vonatait rendszeren reggel 1/8 órakor indítják a HÉV Kerepesi-dti végálló-  
mástról. (Keleti pályaudvar érkezési oldala.)

A csoportos zárandoklatok külbővonati kedvezményes jegre oda-  
vissza 3,20 P. Jegyet a személypénztárnál egyéniileg venni senkinek sem  
kell. A külbővonatra semmiféle kedvezmény, vagy árcképes igazolvány  
nem érvényes.

Train timetable to the Máriabesnyő shrine,  
concessions for pilgrims, 1941

## After the Second World War and today

After the Second World War and then during the decades of socialism pilgrim trains were not operated, either within the country or abroad. Only parish communities organised traditional pilgrimages within the country, with waning popularity.

However, after the change of political system a number of travel offices (Kárpáteurópa, Misszió Tours) were set up with the aim of organising pilgrim trains, special trains along the lines of the old pilgrimages, to various shrines. Three of these have become a regular feature over the past decade. Their destinations are

Mariazell (Steiermark, Austria) that has been visited by Hungarians for centuries; the famous shrine of the Paulines (OSPPE=Ordo Sancti Pauli Primi Eremitae) in Częstochowa (Poland); and Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu), a 500-year-old Székely-Hungarian shrine in Transylvania that was annexed to Romania after the First World War. The first Częstochowa pilgrimage by train took place in 1939 when the believers told thanks to the Virgin Mary in Jasna Góra for re-settlement of the Pauline Order (OSPPE) in Hungary.

The spiritual content of the train pilgrimages to these three places is complex. In addition to the religious motivation, other factors are Hungarian identity, historical cohesion, visiting natural and cultural attractions. In late September 2013 a special train took pilgrims to Mariazell, regarded for centuries as a Hungarian national shrine, on the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pilgrimage made there by the Hungarian king Louis the Great (1342-1382). In addition to church people, the Hungarian president also took part in this pilgrimage. The Mariazell church is full of Hungarian relics: a statue of King Louis the Great stands at the entrance, another is the second miraculous image, known as the Schatzkammerbild (Treasury Madonna), the gift of King Louis the Great. When the church was rebuilt in the Baroque age, Hungarian aristocrats founded four side chapels. It was here, in the chapel of the Hungarian King Saint Ladislas, that Cardinal József Mindszenty, the bloodless Hungarian martyr of a Hungarian national shrine, was buried. All this made Mariazell a Hungarian national shrine.

In June 2013 the "Black Madonna Pilgrim Train" to Częstochowa was organised under the spiritual leadership of the Pauline monks, proclaiming the "spiritual renewal" of the nation. Częstochowa, a shrine close to the border of the old Kingdom of Hungary, was founded by Hungarian Paulines in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The ties to this order have remained very close right up to the present. They are also strengthened by the traditional Polish-Hungarian friendship. This is why Hungarian can be found politicians among the pilgrims led by the Paulines on the "Black Madonna Pilgrim Train".

After the change of political system (1990) Csíksomlyó, the Franciscan shrine in Transylvania, in the Székelyföld region soon took over the role of national shrine. Besides being the site of the traditional Whitsun feast, it became the symbolic place of the Hungarians' will to survive: despite the nine decades of Romanian oppression the Székelys have remained Catholic and Hungarian. From the 1990s the shrine became a sacred place with an ecumenical character where some half a million Hungarians gather at Whitsun each year. For the past seven years the "Csíksomlyó Express – Székely Rapid All-Hungarian Pilgrim Train" has operated between Budapest and Csíksomlyó and its passengers take part in the Whitsun feast. According to the agency organising the travel, the motivation is the "uplifting feeling of Hungarian togetherness, the beautiful scenery".





The Székely Express, pilgrim train to the Csíksomlyó shrine, 2012

Summing up: Catholic consciousness, the feeling of belonging to the Christian Hungarian community and together, and Hungarian historical remembrance also play a major role. But a kind of nostalgia for the railways can also be seen in the case of all three present-day pilgrim trains. All these phenomenon are not independent from the contemporary lifestyle, feeling to life which is determined by the historical situation in the given era. The 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century long-distance train pilgrimages besides strengthening Christian Catholic cohesion have also been a big factor in structuring Hungarian national identity and shaping Hungarian historical awareness.

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1926 *Róma. Képek és hangulatok a szentévi hatodik magyar zarándoklat alkalmából.* [Rome. Pictures and moods from the sixth Hungarian pilgrimage of the Holy Year] Székesfehérvár.

DESSEWFFY Sándor

1893 *Csanád-Egyházmegyei zarándoklat Rómába 1893. évi április hó 5-11-én XIII. Leo pápa 50 éves püspöki jubileuma alkalmából.* Temesvár.

LONKAY, Antal

1879 *Az én első róm. utam és vaticani zarándoklatom 1877-ben.* [My first journey to Rome and Vatican pilgrimage in 1877] Budapest.

1882 *Az én második róm. utam, vaticani és lourdesi zarándoklatom.* [My second journey to Rome and pilgrimage to the Vatican and Lourdes] 1-2. rész. Budapest.

## ORTHODOX JEWISH PILGRIMAGES BY TRAIN BEFORE 1944 IN HUNGARY

**Abstract:** The railways were gradually built into a network covering the whole of Hungary and affecting all citizens. The influence they had in changing everyday life must be taken into account for an understanding of the processes of modernisation in the 19th century. The study examined how one denominational group within the diverse society of the Carpathian Basin, the Orthodox Jews living mainly in rural environments and making up more than half the Jewish population of the Kingdom of Hungary before 1920, made the railways religiously acceptable. It analyses the cultural practices of railway travel: the use of the railway spaces, the services provided for travellers, and the responses of the operators to the special demands of Orthodox Jews. The railways brought new possibilities for geographical mobility in the everyday lives of Jews, but religiously accepted reasons were needed for travel. Making a living, study, medical treatment and pilgrimage as reasons approved by the community for travel were found not only among Jews but were much rather a general characteristic of the premodern world. In the case of Orthodox and Hasidic Jews, the railways became not only a new invention overstepping the bounds of a community, they also constantly reshaped the religious conditions for railway travel beyond the regulation of time by religious law.

**Keywords:** Hasidism, Orthodox Jewry, everyday life, travel literature, train, kosher food, Hungary

Orthodox Jews in Hungary received the trends of modernity with reservation. They subjected the phenomena seeping in to the urbanising, modernising communities to strict community control. Nevertheless, they adopted many customs of bourgeois society and later of mass society. The question of train travel was a special case of this alternative integration. How did one denominational group within the diverse society of the Carpathian Basin, the Orthodox Jews living mainly in rural environments and making up more than half the Jewish population of the Kingdom of Hungary before 1920, make the railways religiously acceptable? How did the East European Jews fit into the interpretations of the railways offered by the *Ostjuden*? What cultural practices arose to provide the Orthodox travellers with kosher food? How did the operators of the railways respond to the particular, special demands?

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\* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem u. 2. Hungary. Email: [norbertglaesser@gmail.com](mailto:norbertglaesser@gmail.com)

The railways became a network covering the whole country and affecting all citizens. For an understanding of the modernisation processes of the 19th century we need to take into account the effect the railways had in changing everyday life.<sup>1</sup> At the same time embourgeoisement took place in different ways – in time and space – within the different groups of society. The influence of the railways on everyday life became important for Jews in adapting their earlier geographical mobility to the new possibilities. The railways became part of the everyday life of Orthodox Jews in the economic sphere, but how did they affect religious life? To understand the phenomenon we need to examine three questions: the legitimate occasions for travel in the Orthodox Jewish communities, the incorporation of the railways into religious life, and the response given by the Hungarian Royal Railways or other locally-owned railways to Orthodox Jewish needs.

Before the First World War Hungary had one of the densest railway networks in Europe (more than 22,000 km of tracks). The railways brought new influences, values, lifestyle customs to the population, even if few people travelled by train up to the 1890s. The supply of goods changed in settlements along the main lines. The dense railway network resulted in the rapid spread of the bourgeois way of life by the turn of the century. People in small settlements could buy the same things in their shops as the residents of big cities. This could be seen on the one hand in imported groceries and on the other in home furnishing. After the branch lines were opened, new buildings, jobs and customs appeared throughout the country and became part of everyday life in the space of a single generation.<sup>2</sup> The change in community perceptions of the railways – seen from the angle of modern popular urban culture at the turn of the century and in the decades after the First World War – can be observed mainly in columns of the Jewish press devoted to nostalgic Jewish writings, feuilletons and Jewish wisdom. While Jewish publicists who had left behind the rural Jewish world characterised the attitude of their parents' generation to the arrival of the railways with commonplace expressions of aversion, later journalists wrote about how the railways became part of religious life. The use of the railways as an example also appeared among the wisdom of East European Jewish piety that could be adapted for the urban Orthodox bourgeoisie.

“The fame of the tsadik of Szanc spread throughout the world in the middle of the last century. – wrote the Orthodox Jewish Paper – He exhorted his believers to draw moral conclusions from the contemplation of the latest achievements of human technology. He said that the telegraph teaches us to take care of every word because we will have to pay for every superfluous word – up there, the rushing train teaches us to change our ways, for sometimes because of a

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1 MAJDÁN 2001. 137; FRISNYÁK 2013.

2 MAJDÁN 2001. 137, 140-141, 151.

minute we can be fatally late, the telephone reminds us that we are speaking here, but in the heavenly receiver they hear everything.”<sup>3</sup>

### Setting out on a journey

A religiously accepted reason was needed for travel. Making a living, study, health treatment and pilgrimages, as reasons for setting out on a journey approved by the community were found not only in Judaism, they were rather a characteristic of the premodern world. Over the course of its history European culture legitimated travel in different ways. This also differed greatly in the case of different groups within society.<sup>4</sup> In the centuries before modernity the pilgrimage was the only legitimate form of travel for broad masses of Christian society. In the case of Jews, up to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries long-distance trade was also allowed, in ways that varied from country to country.<sup>5</sup> In the new age and in the early days of modernity, travel to spas for health reasons became an important occasion for travel. This was especially true in the case of women, for whom it was the only accepted form of travel for other than religious purposes.<sup>6</sup> Surplus capital, free time and independent disposal over it, as well as social acceptance of the demand for travel were all indispensable for the modern bourgeois desire to travel.<sup>7</sup>

A number of written records have survived of earlier forms of travel among Jews.<sup>8</sup> The memoirs in Hebrew of Dov Ber Bolechów (1723-1805), for example, have preserved the memory of the activity in Hungary of Jewish linen, leather, brandy and wine merchants from Little Poland in the mid-third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He had a thorough knowledge of viticulture and wine-making in the Hungarian rural areas. His clients were prosperous Jewish merchants and rabbis, but he also did business with the Hungarian and Polish aristocracy. Dov Ber crossed the Carpathians at least six times to buy wine in the Hegyalja region. He travelled on horseback or in a four-horse carriage, and the goods were transported by his employees in carts.<sup>9</sup> When railway transport reached a mass scale at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century what had been weary travel and transport on dirt roads, dependent on the seasons and exposed to the weather, became easier and quicker. In the first half of the 1890s masses who had never previously travelled by train or only very occasionally became regular users.<sup>10</sup> The appearance of the Hungarian Orthodox Jewish press in Hungarian coincided in time with the great increase in

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3 *Orthodox Zsidó Újság* 10 May 1942 / 5. A rebbek világából [From the World of the Rebbes]

4 BAUSINGER et al 1991.

5 Cf. BEN-SASSON 1985. 466, 468, 470, 475-476.

6 GYÖMRI 1934. 92, 125, 138.

7 GYÖMRI 1934. 92, 125, 138; GRANASZTÓI 2000. 106-108.

8 SPITZER – KOMORÓCZY 2003. 116-121, 145-148, 573-584, 691-692.

9 KOMORÓCZY 2013. 38-40.

10 FRISNYÁK 2013. 7-8, 10.

train travel, but it was in the interwar years that it carried many indirect references to use of the railways on a mass scale.

Travelling in various forms – from travel for business and private purposes to entirely modern tourism as a leisure activity and search for the exotic – was present among the Orthodox too. By the turn of the century kosher kitchens and canteens serving travellers opened not only in the capital but also in Makó, Szeged and other small and large settlements in Hungary. They ranged from country businesses run by Orthodox women offering home cooking, through canteens opened in regional centres aimed at serving travelling Orthodox men, to restaurants in Budapest. At the same time, helping travellers is also considered to be a good deed earning merit. In Berettyóújfalu in 1927 the children of a deceased, devout father built the ‘Orajch’ hotel for the poor in his memory. It was also the custom in other Orthodox communities to provide hospitality for travelling co-religionists or the needy.<sup>11</sup> Travelling to the Holy Land was also regarded as a pious deed, but travel to the Holy Land in its modern form was also a special demonstration of status by the European Christian and Jewish haute bourgeoisie. It was generally rabbis who in the Orthodox press published as travel writings the impressions and experiences acquired on their journeys.<sup>12</sup>



Kosher railway restaurant, Máramarossziget (from private collection)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. GLÄSSER 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2015.

By the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox Jews living from trade or small-scale industry in rural areas travelled by train to the fairs that provided them with a livelihood. This is also reflected in various reports in the press. An innkeeper who was also a kosher butcher was travelling in 1915 on a train on his way to Transylvania to buy sheep at the Karánsebes fair when all his money was stolen just before Szolnok on the Great Plain. After unsuccessful approaches to the authorities in Szolnok and then in Pest, on the advice of an innkeeper he knew in Szombathely he turned to Reb Shayelev, Yeshaya Steiner (1851-1926), Rebbe of Bodrogkeresztúr.

“An innkeeper acquaintance suggested that I should turn with confidence to *Reb Shaye*, in Kerestir. – wrote the Orthodox Jewish press – In my despair I protested, but my friend was insistent. I counted out how much it would cost to return home, I still had 3 crowns left, I sent them to Reb Shayelev. I arrived home without a penny. Three days later I received a letter from the rebbe זצ”ל, that I should stay at home, *toyv vochesed yirdefücho* (good and mercy will follow me). This angered me greatly: why did I allow myself to be tempted to write a postcard. If the rebbe had written telling me to go somewhere, that would have made sense, because perhaps I could start some kind of business, but at home? I would have travelled to look for some way of earning a livelihood, if I had not been in such a bad state financially and spiritually. A few hours after Reb Shayelev’s letter, the village’s “trousers” appeared for a little beer-drinking. As they were drinking, the estate manager said: ‘Neighbour, the company has allocated me 500 litres of spirits for the harvesters, but I don’t want to start measuring out brandy, take it over from me.’ The deal was done. I took delivery of the goods, stored them in the cellar and hastened to sell them on. The profit I made amounted to exactly 20,500 crowns.<sup>13</sup> Since then I have visited Reb Shayelev several times. And the reason I have not fallen into despair over the present difficult conditions is that I have seen from my own case: *hayad Hashem tikcor?* Is the hand of G-d powerless? Can he not help the simplest, even in the most miraculous way?”<sup>14</sup>

The Rebbe of Kerestir appeared in Hasidic stories and in Neolog travel writings as a heavenly intercessor in matters related to livelihood.<sup>15</sup> As the spiritual descendant of the Rebbe of Lizhensk, he placed great emphasis on hospitality in his court. Whenever a *melave demalka* feast was held he had an ox slaughtered for the guests staying with him on the Sabbath. The Hasidim believed that the

<sup>13</sup> Exactly the sum that was stolen from him on the train.

<sup>14</sup> *Zsidó Újság* 30 November 1928 / 7. Aki Reb Sájele tanácsára hallgatott [The man who listened to the advice of Reb Sájele].

<sup>15</sup> *Egyenlőség* 14 August 1910 / 5-9. Látogatásom a bodrogkeresztúri csodarabbinál. [My visit to the miracle-working rabbi of Bodrogkeresztúr]. [Written by:] Miksa Szabolcsi



blessing said for a livelihood was in the hands of the Rebbe of Kerestir. The Ruf of Belz, Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rokeach (1894-1926) sent believers to Reb Shayele in such matters. The saying that the key to the *parnose* (livelihood) is placed in Kerestir is attributed to the chief rabbi of Belz. The rebbes and their followers incorporated the new phenomena into their lives within religious frames. The railways made it easier to meet the Hasidic rebbes. Among the new ways and means of maintaining contact, the telegraph and post also appeared beside the railways.

### To meet the rebbe...

The Torah (5Mos. 16:16) prescribes that all men must make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the three pilgrimage feasts. "Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles [...]". As an analogy one of the important forms of Hasidic pilgrimages became a custom: travelling to the rebbe for the feasts, to pray and study there, to spend the feast "in the shadow" of the rebbe.<sup>16</sup> What led them to travel was the wish to meet: to see the tzadik, to meet the just man. The travellers asked the rebbe for guidance and blessing. The rebbe's merits protected the community of believers. This sense of belonging together appeared in 1932 in the case of visitors arriving on a special train from Sátoraljaújhely to Nyíregyháza to see the Chief Rabbi of Nagykaroly Reb Jajlis, Joel Teitelbaum (1888-1979) who was a guest there for the Sabbath. "They placed a flag on the train with the inscription: "Degel machne Króle" (banner of the general of Nagykaroly). Around a thousand people came to receive their beloved Rebbe."<sup>17</sup>

The Orthodox press interviewed the renowned Hasidic rebbes on the train. The railway figured only as the place of the collective travel, the conversations were about issues of current concern to Jews and Orthodoxy.

### Pilgrimages, local trains and pilgrim trains

The railways in Europe and Hungary became an integral part of Christian pilgrimages.<sup>18</sup> Travel writings record the pilgrimages made by train to distant shrines by the middle classes.<sup>19</sup> The new form of transport also found a place

<sup>16</sup> GLÄSSER 2014. 234. 69.

<sup>17</sup> *Zsidó Ujság* 9 December 1932 / 5. A nagykarolyi főrabbi Nyíregyházán. [The chief rabbi of Nagykaroly in Nyíregyháza]. The Hebrew expression is a paraphrase of the biblical expressions applied to the tribes wandering under their own banners in the wilderness (see: 4Mos 2:1-31): e.g. "On the east: the divisions of the camp of Judah [degel machne jehudo], under their standard [...]" (4Mos 2:3).

<sup>18</sup> See the articles of John Eade and Gábor Barna published in this book.

<sup>19</sup> For a few examples, see: Eck 1915.

in the national and dynastic rites of civil religion. The special trains arriving in the stations became places for meeting the admired or revered person.<sup>20</sup> Railway stations became an important place for mass meetings in honour of Hasidic rebbes. Journeys made by rebbes were accompanied by meetings with them and the wish to stay in their environment. In 1927 the Rebbe of Vizhnitz, Reb *Yisroel Hager* (1860-1936) travelled from Nagyvárád to Debrecen at the invitation of his followers. His journey was accompanied by the rites and routines of official and spontaneously organised meetings.

“On the way in Biharkeresztes a delegation from the local community under the leadership of Chief Rabbi Lipót Fuchs paid their respects to the Rebbe. At the railway station in Berettyóujfalu an enormous crowd demonstrated their veneration and respect for the Rebbe. A deputation from Debrecen also travelled to Ujfalu to meet the Rebbe, and from there he continued his journey through Derecske to Debrecen by car. Many people arrived here from the countryside to spend the Sabbath in the vicinity of the famous Rebbe.”<sup>21</sup>

The hospitality on the Sabbath in Nagyvárád before the visit by Reb Jajlis to Nyíregyháza in 1932 already mentioned became a mass pilgrimage.

“He arrived on Thursday, hundreds of the faithful were already waiting for him at the station, the following day guests poured in from the country, from Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The procession of 72 *buchers*<sup>22</sup> from the yeshiva in Székelyhid attracted much attention.”<sup>23</sup>

It was reported of the Chief Rabbi of Munkács Chaim Eleazar Spira (1868-1937) during his stay in Torna:

“The rebbe is still deep in the mystery of the ‘heiliger Schaboss’<sup>24</sup>, [but – since it is late in the evening] the latest guests appeared who had come from nearby villages to visit the rebbe.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> On the 19<sup>th</sup> century cult of Ferenc Rákóczi, regarded as the last Hungarian “national ruler”, see GLÄSSER 2009; on the Habsburg emperor-kings, see: FRISNYÁK 1994; UNOWSKY 2006. 48, 53, 55, 57, 60, 61, 64, 69, 73, 89, 91, 206.

<sup>21</sup> *Zsidó Újság* 27 May 1927/ 12. Hírek – A wizensitzi rebbe Debrecenben [News – The Rebbe of Wiznitz in Debrecen]

<sup>22</sup> 72 students from the Talmudic school in Székelyhid.

<sup>23</sup> *Zsidó Újság* 8 July 1932/ 4. R. Jajlis Váradon. [R. Jajlis in Várad]. [Written by:] Dávid Rosenberg

<sup>24</sup> sacred Sabbath

<sup>25</sup> *Zsidó Újság* 4 October 1929/ 12. A munkácsi főrabbi kedvéért visszarendelték Kassára az elindult tornai vicinálíst [The local train to Torna ordered back to Kassa for the sake of the Chief Rabbi of Munkács]. [Written by:] József Guttmann

At the same time the rebbes awaited their followers and the press also encouraged these visits. The same motivations appeared in the Orthodox press when reporting on mass visits to tsadiks visiting the region. The visit made to Nyírbátor by Reb Jajlis in 1928 became a pilgrimage for the faithful.

“Hundreds of followers and students already waited for him at the border, at Nagyecsed. His entry into Nyírbátor was nothing less than ‘üsriäs melech baj’,<sup>26</sup> princely. Whole convoys of buses came down the wide streets of Bátor bringing the faithful from Nyíregyháza, Vásárosnamény, Kisvárd, Fehérgyarmat, Büdszentmihály, Tiszapolgár and distant Kovácsháza. The trains also brought guests from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. [...] they came selflessly, with warm hearts, enthusiasm, with souls thirsting for devotion, to see the 43-year-old priest of the revelation made thousands of years ago, to welcome him and draw strength from his presence for the struggles of life. 1500 guests came to Nyírbátor.”<sup>27</sup>

The visit by the Rebbe of Munkács affected the whole of Torna.

“By the afternoon the streets are crowded with the many guests. Since homes were unable to take in all the over 300 guests, they were obliged to make use of non-Jewish homes as well, that were willingly placed at their disposal.”<sup>28</sup>

After the Sabbath was over during the visit mentioned made by Reb Jajlis to Nyírbátor:

“people came all through the night to seek the advice of the Rebbe. And he gave them guidance, raised up the downcast, consoled the sad.”<sup>29</sup>

“On Sunday a great crowd, numbering thousands visited the learned rabbi, to make complaints or seek advice, [wrote the press about the visit by the Rebbe of Ottynia to Máramarossziget] All over the town people spoke of the miracles around the life of the rabbi.”<sup>30</sup>

Those who were unable to travel to the settlement visited by the rabbi accompanied him on a part of the journey in the hope of an audience.

26 “utruat melech bo” = “[the Lord their God is with them] the shout of the King is among them.” 4Mos. 23:21.

27 *Zsidó Újság* 24 August 1928 / 4-5. Reb Jajlisnál Nyírbátorban [Visiting Reb Jajlis in Nyírbátor]

28 *Zsidó Újság* 4 October 1929 / 11-12. A munkácsi főrabbi kedvéért visszarendelték Kassára az elindult tornai vicinálit [The local train to Torna ordered back to Kassa for the sake of the Chief Rabbi of Munkács]. [Written by:] GUTTMANN, József

29 *Zsidó Újság* 24 August 1928 / 4-5. Reb Jajlisnál Nyírbátorban [Reb Jajlis in Nyírbátor]

30 *Zsidó Újság* 26 September 1927 / 10. A szigeti templom-barakk [The temple barracks in Sziget]

"The Rebbe of Belz with his entourage set out on Tuesday afternoon from Homonna, where a special railway carriage was placed at his disposal. – wrote the press in 1931. In Kassa the carriage was connected to the express train from Prague. Hundreds of people were waiting for the rebbe at the Kassa railway station; many of them accompanied him as far as Abos, so that they could submit their requests to him."<sup>31</sup>



Miklós Müller: Hasidim on a train  
(Csongrád County Museum)

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31 *Zsidó Újság* 10 July 1931 / 9. Hírek – A váci Jahrzeit [...] [News – The Vác Jahrzeit]

In 1929 the train on the side line to Torna was ordered back to Kassa for the sake of the Rebbe of Munkács. The chief rabbi had arrived from Marienbad and was to change to the connection to Torna but

“the faithful in Kassa who were waiting impatiently in the railway station rushed up and greeted him with such enthusiasm and admiration that the local train to Torna departed leaving the whole company behind.”<sup>32</sup>

The faithful in Torna also welcomed the train as it pulled into the station with

“cries of joy and shouts of ‘Yechi’<sup>33</sup>.

“The famous guest was welcomed eloquently by Dávid Róth, president of the community, and the victory procession set out towards the town.”<sup>34</sup>

In places where Hasidic rebbes were active, kosher hospitality businesses could appear in railway stations. In 1929 the Josefovits Orthodox kosher bodega operated next to the Szerencs railway station serving meat and milk dishes at all times of day to travellers in the region famed for its Hasidic rebbes and kosher wines.<sup>35</sup> According to the evidence of a postcard from the turn of the century there was a kosher restaurant at the MÁV railway station in Máramarossziget, another important Hasidic centre. Miklós Müller’s (1913-2000) sociophotos have recorded Hasidim from the south of the Great Plain travelling by train in this period.<sup>36</sup>

Jews from Budapest, rural areas and Eastern Europe visited the Monarchy’s famous spas, and these visits continued after the disintegration of the Monarchy.<sup>37</sup> Large numbers of people from the region also visited the rebbes when they came to the popular spas for rest or treatment.

“Everywhere we go we come across our co-religionists with their beards and kaftans. In recent years this spa [Luhaschowitz – G.N.] has become very popular among religious Jews, where they are welcomed. Now there are even more than usual because many of them came for holidays for the sake of the Chief Rabbi of Munkács Lázár

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32 *Zsidó Újság* 4 October 1929 / 11-14. A munkácsi főrabbi kedvéért visszarendelték Kassára az elindult tornai vicinálíst [The local train to Torna ordered back to Kassa for the sake of the Chief Rabbi of Munkács]. [Written by:] GUTTMANN, József.

33 Viva!

34 *Zsidó Újság* 4 October 1929 / 11-14. A munkácsi főrabbi kedvéért visszarendelték Kassára az elindult tornai vicinálíst [The local train to Torna ordered back to Kassa for the sake of the Chief Rabbi of Munkács]. [Written by:] GUTTMANN, József.

35 Advertisement: *Zsidó Újság* 23 August 1929 / 9.

36 Csongrád County Museum, legacy of Miklós Müller (Nicolas Muller).

37 See: GLÄSSER 2008.

[Eleazar] Spira and even more for just a few days, to visit the rabbi on the Sabbath.”<sup>38</sup>

Similar reports appeared in connection with the suddenly deceased rabbi Yaakov Moshe Safrin (1861-1929) Rebbe of Komárom.

“Since he was on holidays in Tarcsafürdő, a constant stream of visitors came from the neighbouring Hungarian towns, Szombathely, Sopron, Pápa, etc. as well as from Vienna, to seek his advice and guidance.”<sup>39</sup>

The final journey of other *tsadiks* who died on a journey and had expressed the wish to be buried at home<sup>40</sup> took on the nature of a pilgrimage. When the remains of the Rebbe of Sziget who died on a visit to his followers in Kisvárdá were returned home:

“Many thousands from Kisvárdá and the vicinity accompanied the deceased to the railway station, after a funeral oration by the Chief Rabbi of Kisvárdá. Many also accompanied him to the present border of the country. Hundreds of people came across from Sziget to travel back on the same train as the deceased. The train rushed past in pitch darkness and ghostly candlelight could be seen from the carriage transporting the coffin, the flickering candles of the army of admirers paying their last respects – it was an unforgettable sight.”<sup>41</sup>

– wrote the Orthodox weekly.

A large crowd made the pilgrimage to Nagysurány, to accompany Chief Rabbi Feivel Plaust (1818-1895) on his last journey, a deed that earned merit in the case of any deceased.

“The train from Nyitra brought a large number of people and the *levayah* began last Thursday morning at 10 a.m.” – reported the community in the Orthodox press.<sup>42</sup>

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38 *Zsidó Újság* 4 August 1931 / 6. A munkácsi főrabbi körében Luhaschowitzon [With the Chief Rabbi of Munkács in Luhaschowitz]. [Written by:] HERMANN, Ignác.

39 *Zsidó Újság* 26 July 1929 / 4. A nagy „Komarner Rebbe” זצ״ל hirtelen elhunyt [Sudden death of the great Rebbe of Komárom]

40 Cf.: *Kicur sulchan aruch* CXCX. 11.

41 *Zsidó Újság* 29 January 1926 / 1-3. A máramarosszigeti főrabbi halála [Death of the Chief Rabbi of Máramarossziget]

42 *Zsidó Híradó* 4 January 1895 / 2-4. A nagy-surányi főrabbi. [The Chief Rabbi of Nagysurány]. [Written by:] STRASSER, Jónás.



The inauguration of the gravestone of the tsadik of Vác (Veitzen), Rabbi Yesh-aye Silberstein (1884-1930) was listed among the pilgrimages by the representative of the Orthodox office as well as by the editor-in-chief of the weekly paper.

“The train that departed from Budapest at 12.20 was crowded with people travelling to the inauguration of the gravestone. *Adolf Frankl* president of the office accompanied by Dr. *Imre Reiner*, *Winkler* chief rabbi of Györszentmárton, *Mayer*, *Braun* and *Welcz* rabbis of the Pest society, *Leichtag* dayan of Ujpest, *Wollner* and *Schwarcz* respectively presidents of the Ujpest and Kunszentmiklós communities, Dr. *Adolf Deutsch* director, *Jenő Groszberg* editor-in-chief, and countless students and admirers of the great gaon all travelled on this train.”<sup>43</sup>

The anniversaries of the deaths of Orthodox rabbis and Hasidic rebbes were commemorated regionally and also at the national level.<sup>44</sup> Considerable masses travelled by train for the anniversary pilgrimages. The changes that had occurred in travel were reflected here too. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century pilgrims came to the grave of the Rebbe of Sátoraljaújhely, Moshe Teitelbaum (1759-1841) on the day of the *Jahrzeit* not only from the neighbouring counties but also from Galicia and Russia.<sup>45</sup> The Hasidic pilgrimage practice of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was close to the forms of pilgrimage in Hungary at that time. Besides those who arrived in carts, pilgrims also came on trains and in buses.

“The Nyíregyháza Local Railways added six bus services, [reported the press in 1930] from Thursday afternoon to Friday afternoon that brought travellers to Nagykálló for the Jewish pilgrimage on the anniversary of the death of Jicchák Eizik Taub.<sup>46</sup> Many came from beyond the border, even from as far away as Poland and Romania, etc.”<sup>47</sup>

In 1933 the Orthodox press also wrote about the form issued by the Hungarian Royal Railways in connection with the anniversary of the tsadik of Kálló.<sup>48</sup> The text on the form stated that those who use it

“are entitled to travel with a half-price return ticket to Nagykálló between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of March of the current year on the pilgrimage to the grave of the former Chief Rabbi Taub Eisig.”<sup>49</sup>

43 *Zsidó Újság* 15 May 1931 / 4. A váci gaon ז"ל sirkőavatása [Inauguration of the gravestone of the gaon of Vác]. [Written by:] HERMANN, Ignác.

44 GLÄSSER 2014. 254-283.

45 GOLDBERGER 1908. 253.

46 Rabbi Yitzchak Eisik Taub (1751-1821)

47 *Zsidó Újság* 14 March 1930 / 2-3. A kállói Jahrzeit [The Jahrzeit in Kálló]

48 *Zsidó Újság* 12 March 1933 / 4. Zarándoklás Kállóra... [Pilgrimage to Kálló]

49 From the text of the form, published in *Zsidó Újság* 12 March 1933 / 4.

According to reports in the press large numbers used the services of the railways for these anniversaries. On the anniversary of the death of the gaon of Vác (Veitzen), Rabbi Yeshaye Silberstein, the association of students informed travellers through the press

“that substantial concessions can be obtained by travelling in groups.”<sup>50</sup>

On occasion Budapest representatives of the Orthodox organisation were also among the travellers. The picture painted by the press evokes the atmosphere of Miklós Müller’s contemporary photo of Hasidim travelling on a train mentioned above.

“Passengers travelling to the Jahrzeit filled whole carriages on the morning trains, where they were able to perform their morning devotions openly in tallit and tefillin. The roads are loud with the horns of cars and buses.”

– wrote the Zsidó Újság about the Jahrzeit of the tsadik of Olaszliszka, C’vi Hirsch Friedmann (1808-1874).<sup>51</sup>



Advertisement for Orthodox canned food (1928)  
(Jewish Theological Seminary – University of  
Jewish Studies, Budapest)

50 Orthodox Zsidó Újság 10 July 1939 / 10. Hírek – A váci Jahrzeit. [News – The Jahrzeit in Vác]

51 Zsidó Újság 23 August 1929 / 1. A lizskai Jahrzeit [The Jahrzeit in Liszka]

## **Thoughts on the history of the particular adaptation of the railways**

The particular receptions and practices can give a deep insight into the impacts of the big systems and social innovations. The Central European Catholic and Jewish pilgrimages form one small segment of particular use. While the former throw light on ways in which the bourgeoisie used the railways, the latter reveal a much more complex adaptation of the railways by Jews in rural areas striving to preserve traditions. In the case of Orthodox and Hasidic Jews the railways were not simply a new invention overstepping the horizons of a community: beyond the religious laws regulating travel in time the religious conditions for travel by train were also continually changing. The innovations mentioned in this study were intertwined with the embourgeoisement of Orthodoxy, above all Orthodox Jews living in Budapest and country towns. The Orthodox kosher restaurants, coffee shops and pensions that appeared in the vicinity of railway stations reflected these new demands. And the Orthodox kosher tinned foods intertwined with excursions and bourgeois hiking in nature, could also offer, beyond the bourgeois frames, independence from the restrictions and uncertainties of the supply network belonging to reliable Orthodox communities and businesses.<sup>52</sup> However, we have few and random sources on the travel habits of Orthodox Jews. Apart from reports in the press, a more nuanced picture can be obtained from recollections, documents on the issue of passports, the disordered archival materials of rural Talmudic schools and Orthodox communities in Budapest, as well as the later *Memorbuchs* and published responses.

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. GLÄSSER 2008.

<b>MAGYAR KIRÁLYI ÁLLAMVASUTAK</b>	
Gy. 100004/32.933. Ker. Min.9736/933.	<b>igazolvány.</b> (Egy személy részére.)
<b>00055. sz.</b>	
aki ..... lakik, s aki a folyó évi március hó 2-től 7-ig Nagykállóba, Taub Eisig volt főrabbi sírjához zárandokol, feljogosítottatik arra, hogy 1933. évi március hó 2-től 7-ig terjedő időben a Nagykállóból való visszautazásnál a kiindulási állomásig, de csak az odaútasra használt útirányon, a magyar királyi államvasutakon, a gyors-, személy- és vegyesvonatokon a használandó vonatnemnek megfelelően váltott	
<b>félárú menetjeggyel</b>	
utazhassék. Budapest, 1933. évi március hó 2-án.	
A nagykállói Sevre Kadisa:	P.H.
A m. kir. államvasutak igazgatócsofága.	
<b>Az igazolvány hátlapja:</b>	
<b>Ervényes a visszautazásra bezárólag 1933. évi március hó 2-től, március hó 7-ig.</b>	
Lebélyegzés a visszautazásnál.	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 200px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	
Az igazolvány a zárandoklásra való odaútasz alkalmával menetkedvezményre nem jogosít. Az igazolvány a jegyváltás alkalmával a visszautazásnál az állomási pénztárnál lebélyegezendő. Az igazolvánnyal az utat megszakítani nem lehet. Ez az utazási igazolvány csak akkor jogosít menetkedvezmény igénybevételére a visszautazásnál, ha a nagykállói Sevre Kadisa a sírlátogatást az utalvány vonatkozó rovatában igazolja és az igényjogosult az odaútaszánál váltott egész jegyet a jegyváltásnál és az ellenőrző közegeknek felmutatja. A nagykállói Sevre Kadisa igazolás a sírlátogatásról:	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 200px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 0.8em;">                         Jegykiállítás illetek                          személyenkint: 0.25 P                     </div>

MÁV concession for the pilgrimage to Nagykálló  
 (Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies, Budapest)

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